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MAY 2018
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PP Arnold

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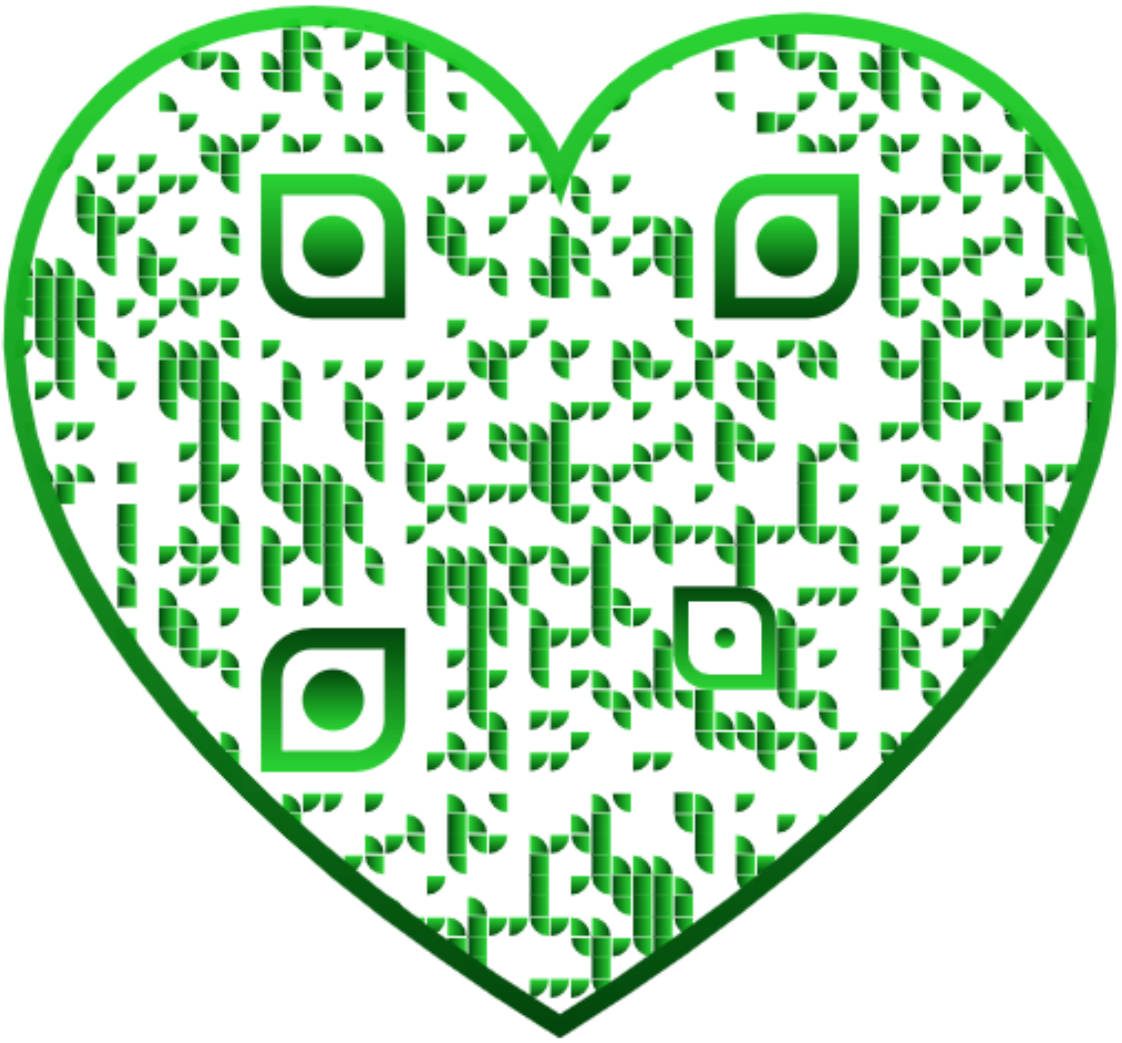

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Welcome...

Potential and talent aren't always rewarded by the embrace of recognition in the unforgiving, corrupting glare of the music industry. This issue, we focus on a series of artists who, for disparate reasons, never achieved all that their prodigious talents deserved. The mind boggles at what Led Zeppelin might have given us, beyond their nine astonishing studio albums, had John Bonham not drunk himself to death at the age of 32, with the band's inspirational guitarist Jimmy Page himself in the grips of heroin addiction. Zeppelin had already cast a transformative spell over the future of rock 'n' roll, but what further brilliance might they have conjured, if they'd been granted more time?

The mind boggles at what Led Zeppelin might have given us if they'd been granted more time

Nick Drake would have turned 70 this year. He harvested far less acclaim than Led Zeppelin in his mere 26 years, tormented by cloying anxiety and a failure to break through to a wider audience until he overdosed on anti-depressants in 1974, leaving thousands of record collectors to later discover a coruscating yet criminally brief discography that includes the stunning trio of *Five Leaves Left*, *Bryter Layter* and *Pink Moon*. Green Gartside and John Parish are performing a night of music in honour of Drake in Bristol in April, and they help Jonathan Wright wrestle with the question of why success eluded this fragile yet outrageously talented guitarist and singer until the decades after his death. If you're somehow a latecomer to Drake, then start with our Classic Album, *Pink Moon* – it's a work of understated perfection. We also speak to P.P. Arnold, an artist who had to overcome domestic violence and the grossly unfair handicap of being a black female soul singer in 1960s America; the Mod Queen was repeatedly ripped off and passed over, never getting rich from an industry riddled with racism and sexism; yet she never lost heart, launching a comeback in 2017 that saw the release of *The Turning Tide* – an album she recorded over a series of sessions at the turn of the 70s. Reward at last. We also salute the determined longevity of Manic Street Preachers, who talk us through making their 13th album, *Resistance Is Futile*, 23 years after their talismanic lyricist Richey Edwards slipped away.

Elsewhere this month, with Record Store Day 2018 upon us, we round up four shop owners and a label boss to debate the future of the event; we tell the unique story of Atlantic Records; delve into Peru's rich punk vinyl heritage and meet the good folk at Alcopop! Records and Brixton's Supertone. Enjoy.

Gary Walker *Editor*

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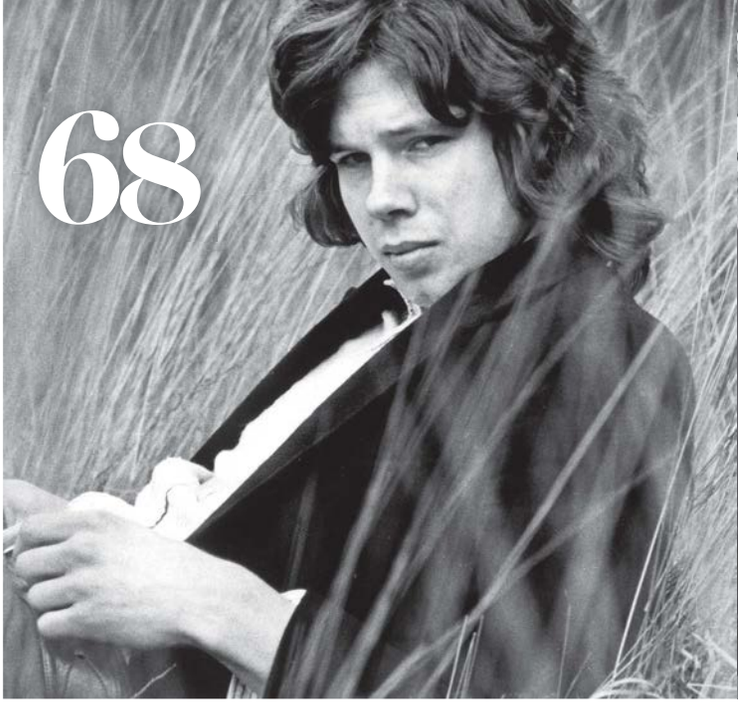
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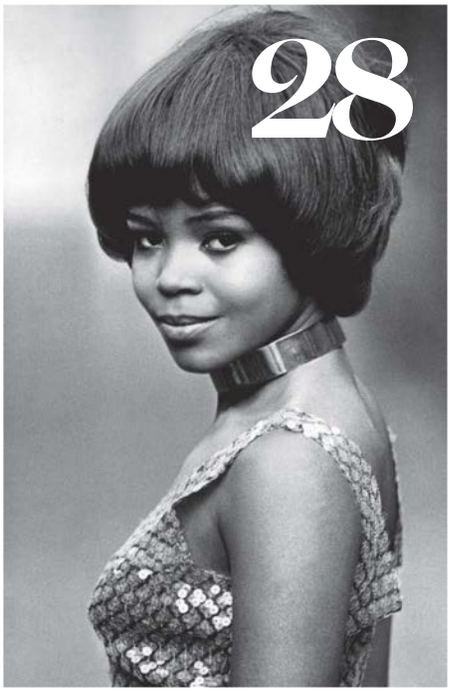
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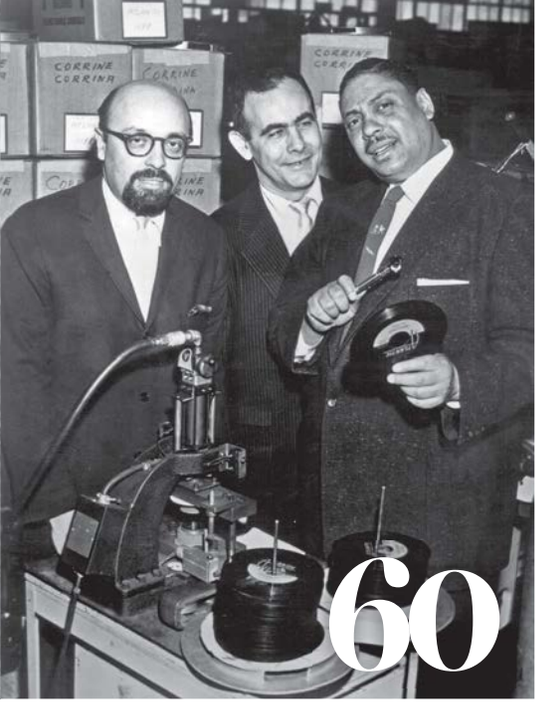

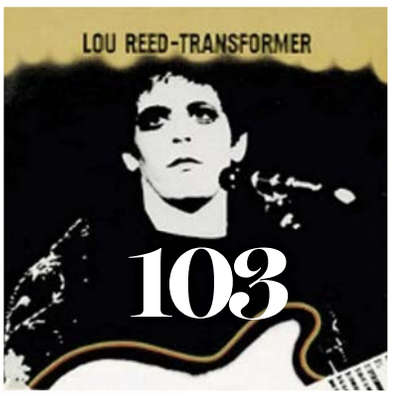

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LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team pick their favourite Led Zeppelin releases

Gary Walker
Physical Graffiti

Owen Bailey
Led Zeppelin II

Jonny Highett
Led Zeppelin I

Andy Cottle
Led Zeppelin IV

Ian Peel
Rock And Roll

Meet our expert contributors…

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

Gareth Murphy
London-born but Dublin raised, Gareth Murphy's childhood was enlivened by his father's work in the 1970s and 80s as a concert promoter. Now based in Paris, he has produced numerous compilations and is the author of *Cowboys And Indies – The Epic History Of The Record Industry*. He's just completed Seymour Stein's memoirs, *Siren Song*, which will be released this year.

Laura Williams
Laura started her journalism career covering news and features for regional and national newspapers and magazines. She went on to edit *247 Magazine* and has contributed to a wide range of music publications, including *Clash*, *Classic Pop* and *Louder Than War*. As the founder of Figure 8 Festival, she helped raise thousands of pounds for charity.

Laura Barton
Laura is a writer and broadcaster. A regular contributor to *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, she is also a contributing editor at *Q* magazine, and an A&R scout for a music publishing company. Her BBC Radio 4 series *Notes From A Musical Island* returns next year, and she is currently hard at work on a book about music and sadness.

Russ Slater
Russ is a writer and editor dedicated to Latin American music and culture. He has published books on Colombia, Brazil, Peru and Argentina and can regularly be found at *Sounds And Colours*, an online portal he created to bring Latin American culture to a wider audience.

Anthem Publishing
Piccadilly House,
London Road, Bath BA1 6PL
Tel **+44 (0) 1225 489 984**

Editor **Gary Walker**
gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com
Creative Director **Jenny Cook**
jenny.cook@anthem-publishing.com
Art Editor **Andy Cottle**
andy.cottle@anthem-publishing.com
Founder & Editor At Large **Ian Peel**
ian.peel@anthem-publishing.com
Production Editor **Owen Bailey**

Contributors **Laura Barton, Glen Bushell, Garth Cartwright, Mark Elliott, Steve Harnell, Giacomo Lee, Chris Mackin, Gareth Murphy, Mark O'Shaughnessy, Jennifer Otter Bickerdike, Chris Parkin, Matt Peters, Simon Raymonde, Paul Rigby, Russ Slater, Gary Tipp, Wyndham Wallace, Jonathan Wright, Laura Williams**

ADVERTISING
Advertising Manager **Jonny Highett**
jonathan.highett@anthem-publishing.com

ANTHEM PUBLISHING
Managing Director **Simon Lewis**
simon.lewis@anthem-publishing.com

CEO **Jon Bickley**
jon.bickley@anthem-publishing.com
Head Of Marketing & Production
Verity Travers
verity.travers@anthem-publishing.com

LICENSING
Regina Erak *regina.erak@globalworks.co.uk*

PRINT & PRODUCTION
Print **William Gibbons & Sons Ltd**
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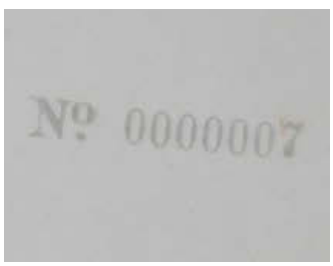
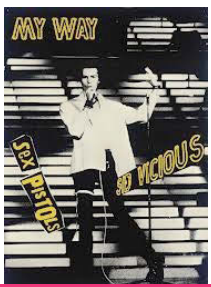


SOLD £23,000

SOLD £11,000



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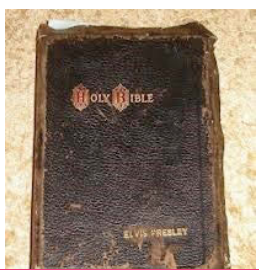

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On the record

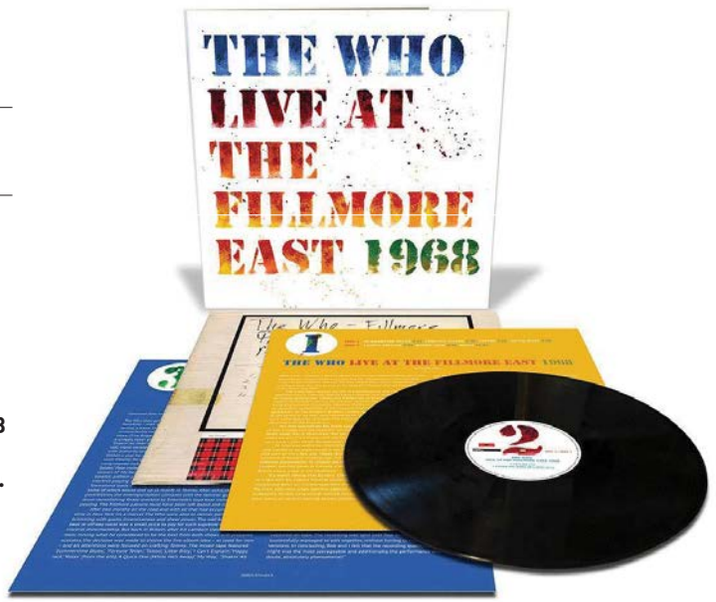
WHO'S BEST!

The Who's *Live At The Fillmore East 1968* is re-released on triple-gatefold vinyl to mark the 50th anniversary of the band at their explosive live peak

To mark its 50th anniversary, The Who will release one of their most revered shows on triple vinyl this month. *Live At The Fillmore East 1968* was recorded on a Friday and Saturday night – 5-6 April 1968 – the same week Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and civil unrest subsequently broke out across the USA over both the assassination and the Vietnam war.

"Both nights were recorded by Who manager Kit Lambert," Universal Music says of the release, "with the intention of releasing the results as The Who's fourth album, after *The Who Sell Out* and before *Tommy*... The second night has now been fully restored and mixed by longtime Who sound engineer Bob Pridden – who was responsible for the band's sound on those nights in 1968 – from the original four-track tapes."

The three-LP set is full of gems, including three Eddie Cochran covers: *Summertime Blues, My Way* and the previously unreleased *C'mon Everybody*. There's also a rare cover of the R&B classic *Fortune Teller* and a 30-minute guitar-and-drum-smashing rendition of *My Generation*. That one track will be split across the A- and B-sides of Disc Three and all three LPs will be pressed on heavyweight vinyl in a gatefold sleeve with printed inner bags.



Five Red Rings

One boxset to rule them all: the first of three deluxe *Lord Of The Rings* soundtrack releases is out now

The soundtrack to Peter Jackson's *The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Ring* is finally set to receive a suitably deluxe vinyl edition. Released this month, the first soundtrack of the movie trilogy comes as a five-disc red-vinyl leather-spined boxset limited to 5,000 individually numbered copies.

Composed and orchestrated by Howard Shore, the soundtrack features two songs written and performed by Enya: *May It Be* and *Aníron (Theme For Aragorn And Arwen)*. It will also be released as a 3-CD set and Blu-ray audio disc containing high-resolution 5.1 and stereo mixes.

Expect an epic listen – as *The Washington Post* declares: "There's probably never been as ambitious a film score as Howard Shore's 10-hour epic for the *Lord Of The Rings* series."

There's more to come, too. 2002's soundtrack for *The Lord Of The Rings: The Two Towers* and 2003's *The Lord Of The Rings: The Return Of The King* have both been confirmed as being prepared for deluxe coloured-vinyl reissues, with release dates to be announced later this year.

CLEARLY KYLIE
Kylie's new album *Golden* has been pressed on clear vinyl as an exclusive for indie stores this month: a limited edition of 4,000 copies in gatefold sleeve.

COLLECTORS' ITEMS
Discogs has launched several new collection-management functions, including filtering by format, genre and release year. You can also now receive instant financial stats on your collection, such as a median and maximum value of all your records.

BLACK GOLD
Craft Recordings' Made In Memphis series continues this month with a 180g repress of 24-Carat Black's *Ghetto: Misfortune's Wealth*. This Stax classic has been repressed at Ardent Studios using the influential label's very own original lathe.

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

1979 began a shapeshifting period for our columnist, during which he went from Selfridges to gigs with Bauhaus and The Birthday Party, to joining the Cocteau Twins

Looking back to music circa 1979 seems a popular thing to do these days. Marc Riley's shows on 6 Music are invariably imbued with the sounds and stories of that remarkable year and, indeed, many of the new bands featured also carry a spirit of '79 inside the cases of their Shergold Masquerader guitars. My own band from 1979, The Drowning Craze, was initially an instrumental three-piece and between us, we liked a diverse mix of music: Delta 5, PiL, PragVEC, the Mo-dettes, Wire, Maximum Joy, The Pop Group, Can, etc. We dreamed of playing shows and putting some singles out.

I was 17 years old and, along with my flatmate and best friend Stan, I was obsessed with music. We lived together in a bedsit in Earls Court, and for almost a year, slept late most days, waking only to light the bong before stumbling out into the darkness to see some bands every night. It was the best of times and, clearly, the influence of the music I saw in this one year had a deep impact on me.

In '79, I had a part-time job working in the sub-basement at Selfridges packing boxes, and though the work was mundane, by the time I got home my brain was so active and full of music. The following year, I started work at Beggars Banquet Record Shop in South Kensington a few minutes' walk from our flat, and our fledgling band signed a singles deal with Situation Two, who were based in a shared office with 4AD, over the record shop. We soon got our first gig at Farnham Art College, and then what seemed like the biggest leap ever, supporting Bauhaus at Portsmouth Guildhall.

Everything seemed to be going so fast. We went almost overnight from this ragged, shambolic and directionless instrumental trio to having Single Of The Week in *NME*!

Our new singer was a New York art student called Angela Jaeger – later to join Pigbag – and writers of the calibre of Paul Morley at *NME* and Dave McCullough at *Sounds* were writing effusively about us. It was all a bit surreal. Angela had to go back to NYC to finish school, but the momentum was with us, and within a few months we were playing with Divine at Heaven in Charing Cross and supporting The Birthday Party in London at the Africa Centre with our new singer Frankie Nardiello from Chicago. Frankie had been in the band

I asked Tracy Pew if I could use his bass rig. "Absolutely not," he intoned, no doubt imagining chewing on my feeble carcass

Special Affect with Al Jourgensen, who went on to form Ministry, and we hoped he would bring a similar magic to Angela.

The Birthday Party were a phenomenal live band. Heavy and yet utterly beautiful, the perfect visual and sonic replacement for the black hole that punk had left us. Tracy Pew, the band's singular bassist, looked like a character from *Midnight Cowboy*, one that would eat anyone who got in his way. I could barely believe I was getting to share a stage with him, yet as we crossed on the stage stairs, I somehow found the courage to ask if I could use his bass rig.

"Absolutely not," he quietly intoned, no doubt imagining chewing on my feeble carcass as he ambled past.

These were our gods. And even though The Birthday Party were probably only five years our senior, it felt like we were simply blessed just to be in the same room as them.

The reality was, we probably weren't good enough to be in the same room as them. It wasn't working out for us with new singer Frankie; indeed he was adorable, but our styles clashed and I don't think we had recovered from losing Angela so soon. I certainly knew this was all I wanted to do with my life, but I had doubts about the rest of the band and whether they cared enough.

Frankie felt it, too, and returned to Chicago to form the band My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult. I carried on with the record shop, and also took a part-time job in a recording studio in Camden.

A MAGIC MEETING

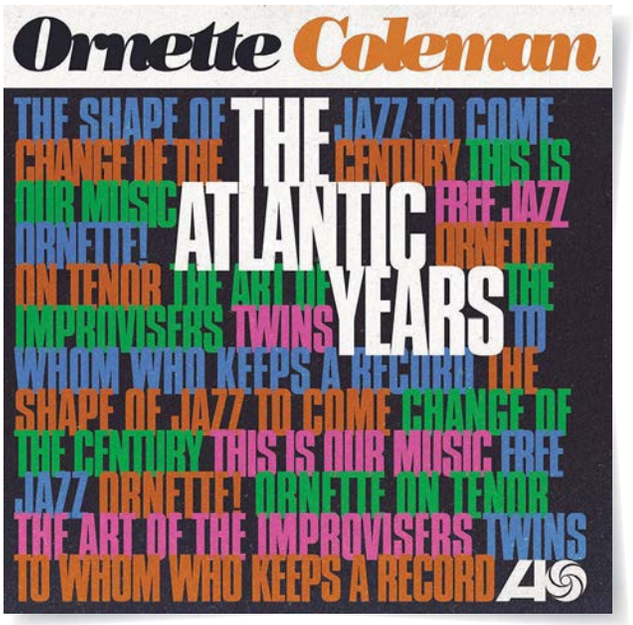
I was becoming close with Elizabeth and Robin of Cocteau Twins and, one weekend, invited them to come use the studio, as the owners were away. "So what do you want to do?" Robin asked, as we entered the studio.

"Me? Nothing! I'm just here to help you, if you want to record anything, this time is yours," I told him. "Oh! We thought you wanted to write some songs with us. Have you got any basslines?" he said, in his lovely soft Scottish brogue. Elizabeth went out for chips, Robin and I wrote a song (*Millimillenary*) and when she came back, Elizabeth was immediately in love with the music and sang on it straight away. It was a wonderful night, unexpected and quite magical. A week later, Robin called me and asked me if I'd like to join the band. I didn't need to even think about it. ●

SIMON RAYMONDE ***is currently in Lost Horizons and was the bassist and keyboard player in Cocteau Twins. He founded the independent record label Bella Union.***

BLINK AND YOU'LL BLISS IT
Out now – and confirmed as never getting a re-press – is a limited-edition 12" coloured version of Björk's *Blissing Me* remixes. The aqua-coloured disc is designed by her long-term collaborators M/M.

NEW FATHERS
Young Fathers' *Cocoa Sugar* is out now on Ninja Tune, following up 2014's Mercury Prize-winning *Dead* and 2015's *White Men Are Black Men Too.* A second, limited-edition version is also planned.



10 SLICES OF JAZZ
COLEMAN BOX TO COME

Legendary saxophonist, groundbreaking composer and all-round jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman is celebrated with the 11 May release of a 10-album vinyl boxset. Pulling releases from the Warner Music and Atlantic Records catalogues, *The Atlantic Years* takes in all six studio albums Coleman made between 1959 and 1961 and adds over two hours of outtakes.

Each LP has been remastered by John Webber at AIR Studios and each one comes in a "replica European-style 1960s jacket in a side-loading slipcase", which also houses a 12"x12" booklet. The highlight of the set has to be 1961's *Free Jazz…*, a single-track album on which Coleman leads two quartets (one in each channel of the stereo mix) through a 40-minute improvisation.

Purple Thunder

This month sees the release of a special purple-vinyl edition of one of *Long Live Vinyl*'s recommended albums of 2017. Thundercat's *Drunk* has been slowed down, remixed and re-edited by DJ Candlestick and OG Ron C of Houston DJ collective The Chopstars. Retitled *Drank*, the "chopped not slopped" mix initially appeared on an unofficial mixtape online, but Thundercat loved it so much, he's made it official.

"If you got *Drunk*, it's only right that you get *Drank*. I feel like they go together," Thundercat says. "And I've always been a fan of chopping up creative music", explains DJ Candlestick. "A lot of people don't know we chop up rock and alternative music. We believe in chopping up everything!" The purple-vinyl double LP is out now via Brainfeeder.

PRINCE RARITY SURFACES

A copy of Prince's infamous *'The Black Album'* has sold for more than $5,000. A very anonymous-looking white-label promo pressing was in fact the highest-value sale on Discogs last month; the site described it as the "limited-edition numbered grey variant". Fetching $5,332, "this particular edition of the coveted Prince release came in a white sleeve without title, credits, or listed performer," Discogs says, "with the catalogue number 1-45793 and record-company information appearing only on the spine…" Other recent high-ticket sales on the site include a mispressed 7" of Minor Threat's 1981 *In My Eyes* on Dischord Records that fetched $2,500. A 1988 Sub Pop Singles Club edition of Nirvana's *Love Buzz*, meanwhile, hit $2,483.

CRATE DIGGING WITH... Brix Smith Start

"I feel like we're the underdogs," Brix Smith Start says of her new band, Brix & The Extricated. Their album, *Part 2*, is out now and they're gearing up to spend the second half of 2018 touring, but there's always time for some crate digging… "These are all songs that have inspired me to write," Brix explains. "My 'go to' or 'how to' list…"

JOHNNY CASH

HURT

"Cash's version is even more moving than Trent Reznor's original, which shows just how well the song was written. Cash was able to tap into the despair, which resonated with his own suffering and life experience."

THE CLASH

THE GUNS OF BRIXTON

"I picked *Guns Of Brixton* as it is this song that gave me my name. I consider The Clash to be a punk band, but it was their use of reggae, ska and rockabilly that excited me as a teenager."

BECK

LOSER

"Beck's *Loser* helped me to experiment in my own songwriting. It gave me the courage to do so, and broke a stranglehold of my preordained, dogmatic thought processes."

THE BEACH BOYS

GOOD VIBRATIONS

"It addresses spirituality in a non-denominational way, that's palatable to the masses. It feels good to listen to because, well, its sound vibrations are so good… and that's no accident."

N.W.A

FUCK THA POLICE

"Quite simply, N.W.A get me in the mood… for the studio, that is. I listen to *Straight Outta Compton* on repeat before I go into the studio to record. *Fuck Tha Police* says it like it is."

THE STOOGES

I WANNA BE YOUR DOG

"Possibly one of the best riffs ever written. So good, it carries the entirety of the song on a head-banging, filthy tidal wave of groove."

CROSBY, STILLS & NASH

SUITE: JUDY BLUE EYES

"My mother had great taste in music. I pillaged her record collection. As a child, this was my favourite song. I learned to sing three-part harmonies from CSN."

EAGLES

HOTEL CALIFORNIA

"The listener is completely immersed in the story of the song and is taken on a six-and-a-half-minute journey into alternate reality, similar to being engrossed in a great book."

NIRVANA

SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT

"A masterclass in chorus writing. This is how to do it, and this song is my benchmark. When the chorus comes in, it's so uplifting, I feel as if I might explode. This song just smashes it in every way."

THE BEATLES

WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS

"George Harrison's guitar becomes both the vehicle and the metaphorical subject matter of the song. He creates an atmosphere of beautiful sadness, coupled with longing and veiled hope." ●

The Story Behind The Sleeve

#12 Motor Booty Affair

Parliament

Parliament's 1978 concept album about raising Atlantis through the power of funk deserved a cover to match the inspired lunacy of its content; and it was up to Detroit's Overton Loyd to duly oblige. This was the artist's first album cover for the band, although he had illustrated a comic book included with its 1977 predecessor, *Funkentelechy Vs. The Placebo Syndrome*, which introduced the funky parallel-universe Darth Vader character Sir Nose D'voidoffunk (who's about to be devoured by the bird of prey on the front of *Motor Booty Affair*). The gatefold sleeve featured Loyd's portraits and cardboard cut-outs of characters mentioned in the songs, and a pop-up Atlantis. There's also a picture disc showcasing his illustrations – and Loyd went even further beyond the call of duty to create a crazed animated TV commercial and tour costumes. The artist worked on further album and stage art and other multimedia projects for the band, with his 'Funk Aesthetic' style gracing various offshoot projects.

Now Spinning

Enjoy the 13 essential tracks on our turntable this month with our latest companion beer Double Chin, a punchy double IPA from Beavertown – the north London brewery founded by Led Zeppelin singer Robert Plant's son Logan.

1 ***Tir Ha Mor*** – Gwenno (Heavenly Recordings)
2 *A Song For The Sadness* – **Manic Street Preachers (Columbia)**
3 ***It Was Not Natural*** – Wye Oak (Merge)
4 *Luminous Beings* – **Jon Hopkins (Domino)**
5 ***Place To Be*** – Nick Drake (Island)
6 *Seven Falls* – **Laura Veirs (Bella Union)**
7 ***My Generation (Live)*** – The Who (UMC)
8 *Tired Eyes* – **Neil Young (Reprise)**
9 ***Shoe Boot*** – Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats (Stax)
10 *Meshkalina* – **Traffic Sound (Essex Records)**
11 ***Subaru Nights*** – Insecure Men (Fat Possum)
12 *Carrion* – **Gengahr (Transgressive)**
13 ***Dazed & Confused (Live)*** – Led Zeppelin (Warner)

RSD Extras

Our Official Record Store Day 2018 supplement, free with last issue, was jammed to the rafters with exclusive releases for this year's event, but still the announcements keep coming... First up, a red vinyl 7" of The Vapors' New Wave-defining *Turning Japanese*: a stickered, hand-numbered limited edition. Sugar Ray will celebrate the 20th anniversary of their *Fly* single with a 7" repress on "coke-bottle clear" vinyl. And Jesus Jones mark the 25th anniversary of the *Zeroes + Ones* single with a 12" clear vinyl version combining the Prodigy remix with two rare mixes by Aphex Twin.

BRAZIL ON VINYL
Far Out Recordings continue their quest to press the lesser-heard sounds of Brazil onto vinyl with the release of dreamy Brazilian pop from 1981 – from Edu Passeto & Gui Tavares and their *Noite Que Brincou De Lua* album.

NEW VELVET
Miss Velvet And The Blue Wolf's debut album *Bad Get Some* gets a vinyl edition via Isotopia Records and was recorded at Detroit's United Sound System studios, the site of Berry Gordy's first ever recordings in 1959.

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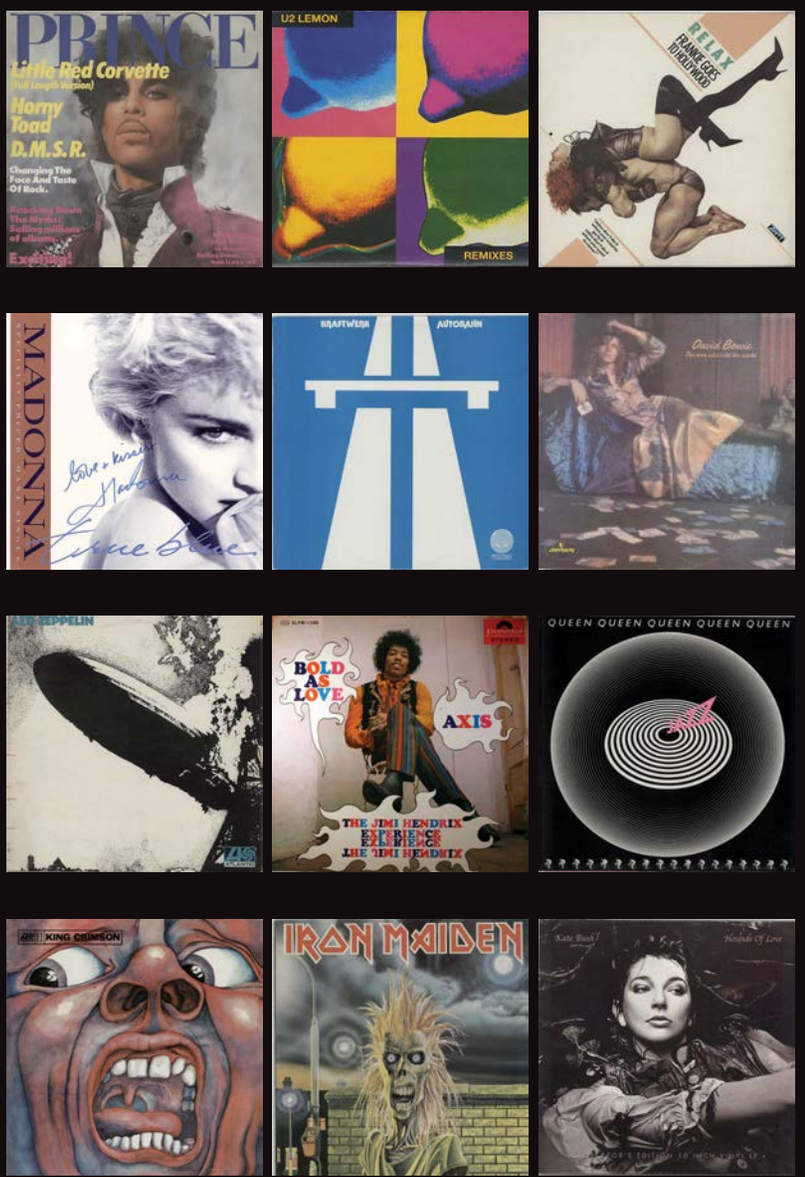

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Mean Streets

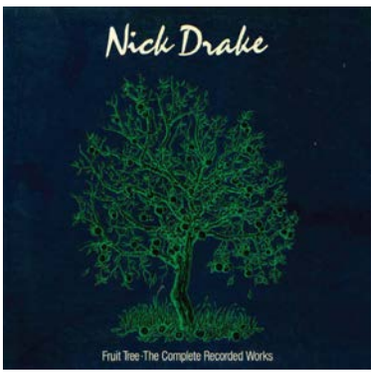
The Streets' first two albums get a double-vinyl re-press this month (see our review on p105). That's 2002's *Original Pirate Material* – originals of which often fetch more than £100 – and 2004's *A Grand Don't Come For Free*, with No. 1 single *Dry Your Eyes*. Annie Mac still hails *Original Pirate Material* as "a bona fide classic", and Mike Skinner has a few rare dates across late April, starting off at Birmingham's O2 Academy on 19 April.

FOUR TET REMIXES BICEP

Four Tet, who's recently remixed Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith, Todd Terje and Rihanna, has reworked the latest single from dance duo Bicep. *Opal* (Four Tet Remix) will be released on limited-edition 12" on 27 April, in a sleeve designed, like all recent Bicep releases, by Portuguese collective Royal Studio. The duo play across Europe for the next three months, taking in Sonar, Reading and Leeds and a sold-out night at London's Roundhouse.

Email news and press releases to
ian.peel@anthem-publishing.com

YOUR MOST VALUABLE VINYL



NICK DRAKE

FRUIT TREE: THE COMPLETE RECORDED WORKS

An original 1979 UK first-issue 35-track triple-vinyl LP boxset, with each disc in its own unique picture sleeve. The box has a 16-page extensive biography and lyric booklet and the set is encased in a clamshell picture box. NDSP100.

£ **£125**

LED ZEPPELIN

THIS IS LED ZEPPELIN

Unusual Australian four-track vinyl 7" EP featuring *Whole Lotta Love*; *Good Times, Bad Times*; *Immigrant Song* and *Hey, Hey, What Can I Do* issued in a unique red-bordered picture sleeve. EPA220.

£ **£100**

COVERDALE PAGE

COVERDALE PAGE

Rare 1993 UK 11-track vinyl LP featuring Whitesnake and ex-Deep Purple lead vocalist David Coverdale and Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page. A sealed, mint-condition version of this rare 90s vinyl issue will fetch a decent return. EMD1041

£ **£85**

KATE BUSH

LAKE TAHOE/ AMONG ANGELS

2012 UK limited-edition 10" picture disc released exclusively for Record Store Day and limited to just 200 copies. A mint and unplayed copy in the original title-stickered sleeve should fetch a very good price.

£ **£100**

On The Radar

GWENNO

A Welsh singer singing in Cornish, Gwenno Saunders is a rare talent…

When she was still a teenager, Gwenno Saunders took off from her home in Wales on a tour of pubs around Cornwall, singing pop songs. There's nothing unusual about that. And yet Gwenno managed to bamboozle her audiences with what would then have seemed like an act of avant-garde provocation on a par with self-immolation. "People were going, what are you doing?! What is this? Are you singing in… Cornish?!" recalls Gwenno, 20 years on. "It was totally ridiculous."

But that was then. These days, pub-goers in Redruth might be more welcoming of Gwenno's teenage radicalism. Cornish is now recognised as a minority language by the European Charter For Regional Or Minority Languages and, confirms Gwenno, "even the signs for toilets are in Cornish". So, after the success of her 2014 album, *Y Dydd Olaf*, on which she sang in Welsh, Gwenno decided to finally make an album in that language's Brythonic cousin, Cornish. *Le Kov* is the dreamily cinematic outcome.

Though a logical next step for Gwenno – who you might remember as a member of 60s girl-group revisionists, The Pipettes – this wouldn't be the case for 99.9-plus per cent of the UK population. She grew up speaking Cornish and Welsh as first languages, thanks to her dad writing Cornish poetry and her mum studying Welsh. "My Cornish experience was the home. It was me, my sister and my dad making up stories and songs and just being silly," Gwenno explains. "I had records like Brenda Wootton, Bucca and other Cornish folk bands, and imagined everyone in Cornwall spoke Cornish because every time we went there, all my dad's friends spoke it, and I was like, 'Oh, it must be a bit like Wales and there's a Cornish heartland somewhere'. That's what Cornwall was to me. It was this really intimate, homely feeling."

In truth, only 1,000 people speak the language. So Gwenno has waited for the right moment to tap into this "other instrument, this other type of paint" that most people just do not possess. We're glad she did. Inspired by the ancient history of 14th-century Cornish miracle plays called *Ordinalia* and the work done by Cornish revivalist Robert Morton Nance, as well as her own dreamt-up assumptions about Cornwall, *Le Kov* evokes a lost golden era. It brings the past into the present, with true stories and make-believe – and it has an otherworldly sound to match.

Y Dydd Olaf was a minimal effort influenced by the synthy post-punk of cult Welsh bands Malcolm Neon and Datblygu, but *Le Kov* is windswept, gauzy and bucolic: proggy, even. Gwenno and collaborator Rhys Edwards were bewitched by classic Cornish folk albums such as Bucca's *An Tol An Pedn An Telynor*/The Hole In The Harper's Head) and Brenda Wootton and Richard Gendall's *Children Singing*; the melancholy of Breton music, the Celtic harp playing of Alan Stivell; the prog of Sweden's Bo Hansson, and the psychedelic electronica of Cluster and Aphex Twin. It's a heady mix.

Musical sorcery such as this doesn't often go hand-in-hand with political acts. Nor do songs about cheese (*Eus Keus?*/Is There Cheese?) or gridlocked roads in the school holidays (*Daromres Y'n Howl*/Traffic In The Sun). But *Le Kov* doesn't only express how much Gwenno treasures the Cornish language she's able to speak; its support of otherness also makes it stealthily political. "History is written by the winners, but it also needs to be written by everyone else as well," she says. "I'm driven by narratives that are lesser known, because they hold the secret. Particularly when the UK is having an existential crisis. There's room to ask everyone their story, just in case someone's got the key to a better way of existing.

"If you look at a meadow of wild flowers, the idea that we'd only want one type of flower is insane," she continues. "It's the variety that makes the ecosystem work." *Le Kov* is a magical addition to that. *See www.gwenno.info for tour dates and further info.* ● ***Chris Parkin***

IAN PEEL'S LINER NOTES

After last month's column on Dynaflex, let's go even thinner and talk flexi discs. The first one I ever bought was part of a guitar-tuition book. But not just any old tuition book…

It's a distant memory, but my first flexi disc was bound into a copy of *Thumb Basics,* penned by the legendary slap-and-pop bass player Jonas Hellborg, whose credits cover everything from Mahavishnu Orchestra to Public Image Ltd.Hellborg wasn't alone. Flexis were the go-to format for educational audio for many years, so much so that music releases were the exception rather than the rule.

They were also the ad industry's pre-internet equivalent of the QR code-activated free download, and the second flexi I picked up was a prime example: Jack Bruce's *I Feel Free*, which was bound into *The Sunday Times Magazine* in 1986. One-sided, it was advertising the 'freedom' of the futuristically boxy new Renault 21 (otherwise known, to our US readers, as the Renault Medallion).

How valuable can a flexi disc become? Immensely. Just look at Jack White's *Freedom At 21*. This limited run of 1,000 single-sided flexis were released – literally – on 1 April 2012, each one tied to a helium balloon let off in Nashville. You can't get a copy for less than $1,000 now, and one copy even sold the year after it landed for $4,239: that's just over £3,000.

Freedom At 21 finally toppled The Beatles' Christmas Fan Club records at the top of the 'most wanted' list of flexi discs. They'd been the most valuable examples of the format for decades, with a copy of their first annual edition selling on eBay in 2016 for £450. That particular copy was still in its original, dated postal mailer. There's so much to say about this flexible format that I'll revisit it in my next *Liner Notes*. If I don't, I can imagine the letters coming in now: "How can you cover flexis and not mention *Flexipop!* magazine?" Which would be a very good question. Or even: "How can you cover flexis and not cover one of the very first entries in the Pet Shop Boys' discography, *Happy Christmas From The Stars*, which Neil Tennant edited for *Smash Hits* in 1982?"

1,000 of Jack White's Freedom At 21 single-sided flexis were released – literally – on 1 April 2012, each one tied to a helium balloon

Long Live Vinyl contributed in its own small way to the canon of flexi discs back in Issue 2, of course. Attached to the cover of every edition was a double-sided, two-track square yellow flexi (with metallic lettering) celebrating two pioneers of electronic music. Thomas Leer was on the A-side with The Residents on the AA-side. Spellbinding music, which bookended whole chapters of the genre: Leer's track was from 1981, while The Residents' was from their most recent album.

And, for me, having put together dozens of double-album compilations of electronic music (both for majors such as Ministry and Warners, as well as late, lamented cottage-industry indies such as Iris Light and Karvavena), it was a breeze to compile. Just two tracks on a flexi took a matter of days to get together, as opposed to a matter of months – or even years, in the case of something like *The Art Of The 12"* series for ZTT! ●

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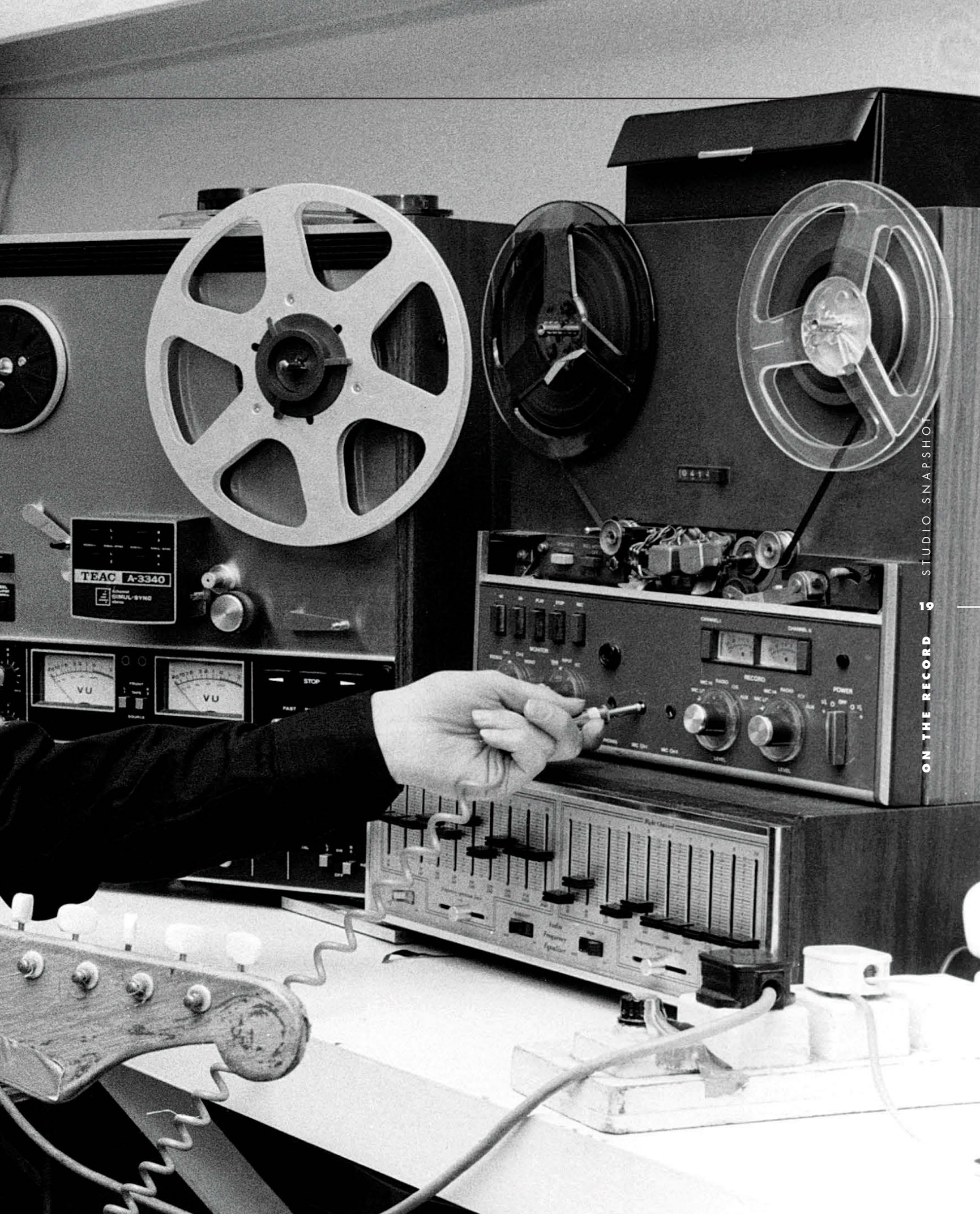
STUDIO
SNAPSHOT

BRIAN ENO

Home studio, 1974

Brian Eno in his home studio in 1974 with five-string Starway guitar, Revox A77 tape recorder and black beret (make unknown), around the time of his second solo album, *Taking Tiger Mountain (By Strategy)* for Island. Having left Roxy Music in 1973 after two albums, Eno's musical path led him to becoming synonymous with experimental, conceptual electronic music – he even coined the now-pervasive term 'ambient' to describe his output. *Taking Tiger Mountain*… employed the standard bass, drums, guitar and vocals format of the time. Yet Eno's compositional quirks (it was around now that he and Peter Schmidt created the famous creativity-unlocking Oblique Strategies cards) and his avant-garde production treatments and layers of overdubs subtly warped the project and displaced rock's conventions, with versatile Roxy guitarist Phil Manzanera and a varied cast of co-conspirators along for the ride. Eno has said of the album: "For me, *Tiger Mountain* is a kind of magic album. There's so much in there that I just wasn't conscious of putting in at all."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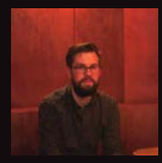
MEET OUR ROUND-TABLE GUESTS

ADAM GILLISON
Jumbo Records
Leeds

JOE BLANCHARD
Bear Tree Records
Sheffield

ASHLI TODD
Spillers
Cardiff

TONY BOOTHROYD
Vinyl Tap
Huddersfield



TIM DELLOW
Transgressive
Records

RECORD STORE DAY ROUND TABLE

It's become an annual highlight for record shops, labels and collectors, playing an integral part in the resurgence of vinyl – but there are criticisms from some quarters, too. *Long Live Vinyl* gets four shop owners and a label boss round the table to find out their opinions on Record Store Day…

LLV HOW MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE HAS RECORD STORE DAY MADE TO YOUR BUSINESS? IS IT POSSIBLE YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE TODAY WITHOUT THE IMPACT OF RECORD STORE DAY?

ADAM GILLISON
Jumbo Records

"It's hard to say, and it's hard to imagine the record shops' calendar without Record Store Day. I feel sure that *something* had to happen to halt the decline in record shops. I think we all recognised that, and many of us were talking to each other to discuss what we could do. That probably laid a little bit of ground for Record Store Day to take root so quickly. I think that we had probably reached a 'now or never' stage, where if many more shops had gone, things could have started to collapse."

JOE BLANCHARD
Bear Tree Records

"I think RSD definitely opened people up to discovering the shop, as we are pretty hidden. The releases and promotion around the event really push it to the forefront of people's minds – to go out and seek out local record shops. I think, equally, the promotion we put in on top of the general RSD promo assists to boost awareness, considerably more so than at other times of the year."

ASHLI TODD
Spillers

"I think over the last decade-plus, RSD has contributed in a massive way to the general resurgence in vinyl sales, which is a benefit to the whole industry we're part of. The turning point in the vinyl demise happened here around 20 years ago, but you definitely got a sense of it galvanising and gaining more momentum in sync with the first five years of RSD. It's definitely helped make things more viable, and that reaches beyond the day itself."

Jumbo Records has recently moved back to a larger store in the Merrion Centre in Leeds

Bear Tree Records in Sheffield has specialised in vinyl since it opened in 2015

TONY BOOTHROYD
Vinyl Tap

"The shop has been involved with Record Store Day since the very first one, although I've only been involved for the last eight years. Vinyl Tap was an online business when RSD first started, and I remember at that time, there was a definite feel of doom for retail shops, and many of the shop owners were pessimistic about the future. When I found out that our local shop was to be the next to close, I decided I didn't want that to happen and bought it. Since then, there has definitely been a steady increase in publicity about shops and vinyl, and this has to do in part with RSD. So, as such, I wouldn't say that we wouldn't be here without RSD – but it has most definitely helped with the profile of our, and all other, independent record shops."

TIM DELLOW
Transgressive Records

"I love Record Store Day – I think it's a great gateway to getting people engaged with local music fans and their local shop, and also a chance for something magical to appear in their hometown – be it an in-store performance, signing or unique record. I think that sense of accessibility in an area that can be intimidating if you're not an established collector is really important to the business, and its future! As a label, I'd like to think we'd survive without it, but I think culturally, it's important, and that's key."

"IT'S A GREAT GATEWAY TO GETTING PEOPLE ENGAGED WITH LOCAL MUSIC FANS AND THEIR LOCAL SHOP"

MUCH IS WRITTEN ABOUT THE 'VINYL REVIVAL'. HOW MUCH OF THAT RESURGENCE IS DOWN TO RECORD STORE DAY?

AG "It's a big part, but to be honest, it was already there, even though it was at a much lower level. Record Store Day didn't create the demand out of thin air – it was based on a small, but growing, passion for vinyl records and the process of shopping for them."

JB "The vinyl revival seems to have been going on for quite some time now, ha ha. I think it's always been there, and I don't think Record Store Day has done anything to hurt growing sales of vinyl. The demand is definitely still growing, perhaps a little slower than two or three years ago, but there's definitely still growth. I think it's a variety of factors, though. Record Store Day has helped for sure, but I think equally passionate record-shop owners and staff, and passionate and innovative labels pushing things in new directions… it all works well together."

AT "A few things that have been instrumental in the revival: the shops that had the conviction to ignore those that declared vinyl an obsolete format when CDs arrived; the customers who did the same and stuck it out, especially when so little was being manufactured; Jack White, for putting never-ending creativity into desirable, limited formats at the exact time the masses were being pushed to digital; and RSD. RSD's mission statement was first and foremost (and this can feel lost in the 'headline artist' noise) to drive people into independent record shops (at a time when record closures were occurring). While this is definitely achieved, it's also been a hugely successful PR campaign for vinyl, and it would be churlish to not appreciate the wider gain and positive impact that has for anyone selling vinyl all year round (even if this means that sometimes, an indie is 'competing' for sales with Tesco!)."

TB "My opinion is that the record industry actually believed that the general public did not want vinyl, and I spoke to quite a few industry people at that time who were totally against vinyl – they thought it too difficult and something from the past. CDs, downloads and later, streaming, was so much easier. There are several reasons why vinyl has seen a steady increase in sales – I believe that a lot of the small independent labels, including a lot of the dance scene, kept plugging away. After seeing the initial sales on the early RSD results, the record companies started to take notice and then put a few releases out to see what reaction they got. The reaction they got was that the general music-buying public were still very much interested, and since then, it has steadily increased, with all the record companies now very much aware. While vinyl never really disappeared, on the second-hand front in particular, RSD has given new-release vinyl a higher profile in the media, which has certainly made it one of the driving factors behind the so called 'vinyl revival'."

TD "RSD caught a wave that was growing without it – from underground scenes repopularising the idea of records as merch items, then being a badge of honour for fans of a band in the digital age. But it's certainly given it some great PR, and I have no doubt that it helps people starting their collections each year."

WHO DOES RECORD STORE DAY BENEFIT?

AG "First, the shops. That should be obvious by the name. Second, the customers – not just because they go home (hopefully) with a record or two that they wanted, but because the day helps nourish their interest. Third, the record companies – both large and small. Some would disagree with this, but at the very least, we should acknowledge

the knock-on effect – if it helps independent record shops, it should be helping the record companies at some level. On top of all this, there are hopefully some knock-on effects for the artists, for other local businesses, and for town centres."

JB "I think it benefits everyone a little, really. I know there are plenty of negative vibes out there about RSD, but it's a huge day for pretty much every shop; even if they don't take part, I think most record shops see a rise in business on the day. Obviously, the labels do reasonably well out of it and it raises the profile of artists when they have a release."

AT "Everyone involved. Bands get great PR for being involved. Distos and labels get to firm-sale a huge amount of stock to shops, and if we're really lucky and get the ordering about right, we'll cover the outlay and not end up bankrupt! Not to mention those who put the time in to queue. They get the joy of music and discovery. We love the aftermath, those who want to pick through the leftovers and chance on something bizarre. The leftovers can be where the gems are found. Those can be the esoteric releases we wanted to stock, but may have been lost among the headline-grabbing big-ticket items."

TB "I think there are several things that benefit the music business. First, it gets people back into the retail shops, which is vital to show people that they are still there and open for business. Second, it is a definite boon for the record labels, who get incredible sales to the shops involved. Third, the collectors and music fans get some amazing product that, in general, looks and sounds fantastic."

TD "The feedback that we get – record stores. It's tough out there and this drives a huge amount of footfall to their shops. And we want to support that totally. I'd love it if people went each weekend instead of once a year, and we try to support that with special editions for indie stores, bonus discs and in-stores, but you can't deny the importance of such an event. I think it's good for fans, too – I've bought something every year on RSD. There are downers, sure – I think a bunch of regurgitated catalogue gets wheeled out that's probably available on a perfectly good pressing (on delicious black vinyl) for a few pounds second-hand already… but we push to only do essential records, and hope that other labels take the same kind of approach. It also clogs up the pressing plants, which is a bit frustrating!"

DO YOU SEE A DIFFERENT PROFILE OF CUSTOMER ON RSD? IS THAT A POSITIVE THING?

AG "To some extent we do, but it's easy to exaggerate this. Record Store Day attracts customers from far and wide, but we certainly see plenty of faces in the queue that are in the shop week-in, week-out. We also tend to see a good representation of families due to the additional events (live music and so on) that we sort out for the day."

JB "We see all kinds of people. A bunch of regulars, a bunch of people who discover the shop for the first time and then become regulars, people who only come out once a year… it's a bit of everything, really."

AT "Not at all, our day-to-day demographic is extremely broad. We'll be selling a rock 'n' roll publication and jazz reissues to a 70-year-old regular, then a new popular indie hit to a teenager, and all ages/interests in between. RSD attracts a similarly broad crowd. I think there are a few too many releases overall for RSD, but you can't argue with the fact that a lot of tastes are being catered for. It's up to individual shops to carefully decide which releases are the best fit for their customer base, while trying to speculate on things they may not usually stock to try and win a new customer – not that different to stocking decisions made week-in, week-out, just on a much larger scale. It's hard to please everyone when these items are firm-sale and high risk! It's the Olympics of stocking."

> "EVEN IF THEY DON'T TAKE PART, I THINK MOST RECORD SHOPS SEE A RISE IN BUSINESS ON THE DAY"

Founded in 1894, Spillers in Cardiff is the oldest record shop in the world

TB "We do see some people that we don't normally see, but to us, that's good – it gives us a chance to say, 'this is what we do 52 weeks of the year', with new stuff arriving and events all the time. We do a lot of extra work during the rest of the year to show people that we're part of the local community – we have lots of live bands/artists and regularly involve local venues, pubs, cafes, breweries, colleges, etc. Having said that, we do also see a lot of brilliant regular customers in the queue on RSD, and the day itself is a reward for them for their brilliant support throughout the year, so we try to make a day of it."

TD "I think it's a good blend between the older die-hard collectors and also newbies – what I like is how encouraging both can be to each other. I've stood in queues and heard some really passionate debates about music between the generations – and that is entirely spiriting."

IS IT FRUSTRATING TO SEE CUSTOMERS WHO ONLY VISIT YOUR STORE ONCE A YEAR? WHAT DOES OUR INDUSTRY NEED TO DO TO GET MORE OF THEM COMING BACK REGULARLY?

AG "I try not to worry about it too much. One visit is better than no visits, after all, and I like to think that most customers will be back at some point before the next Record Store Day. The industry already creates quite a lot of releases throughout the year that are only available in independent shops, so that's good. As shops, we should also be thinking about what *we* can do to get customers to come back. Some of that might be about creating enterprising ideas – some of it might just be about making Record Store Day as celebratory of record-shop culture as possible."

JB "I don't think there's much that can be done to tackle that, it is what it is. People can shop where they want. They may visit my shop on Record Store Day, but spend the rest of the year shopping at a different independent shop, or Amazon or HMV, who knows? But

there are definite benefits of going to an independent – you will find no end of interesting stuff in there, via browsing, the shop stereo, or staff recommending stuff to you. I think the independent labels are doing a good job at steering customers to independent record shops by doing events, exclusive versions of releases, things like that, and they've been doing that for many years. Major labels are also steadily building on this approach. There are definitely benefits there, for both the labels and the shops. It's a gradual process, which I think shops should also be involved in – trying to initiate collaborations, build relationships with bands and labels – both local and nationally – and hence get people to come back to physical bricks-and-mortar shops to come have that experience of browsing records, and the culture that's there."

Vinyl Tap is an online and bricks-and-mortar retailer based in Huddersfield, specialising in rarities

AT "Not in the slightest. We get plenty of people who only come once a year – Christmas holidays, for example. Or people who only come in for a new Beatles reissue… I'm not inclined to get on my high horse because someone's life keeps them from visiting more frequently, or if they only want these limited goodies. I think the point of RSD is to create an environment that hopefully leaves someone wanting to come back (which is admittedly difficult if you've just sold the last Wedding Present 10" and they storm out in a huff). It is what it is."

TB "It is frustrating, but as I would like to think it is an opportunity – that we can use the event itself to show people what we actually do all year round – this gives us that chance."

TD "I think it's a great day for stores to build a relationship with new customers – even though it's the busiest day of the year, trying to take the time to talk to them and invite them back – engaging with them and recommending other records based on their tastes: all the things I love about my favourite record shops, the personal recommendations!"

THERE IS A DEGREE OF CYNICISM AND NEGATIVITY ABOUT THE EVENT IN SOME QUARTERS – WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THE NAYSAYERS?

AG "It was designed to support the record shops, and you won't find too many record shops that would prefer to be without it. But on top of that, you only have to look at all the events and celebrations that happen on the day to see that this is much more than just shameless commercialism."

JB "It's a tough one. I run both a shop and label, and I know in the past, a bunch of labels had problems getting stuff pressed around Record Store Day due to the increased volume of stuff going to plants for RSD deadlines. We always seem to luck out and it works fine, but I can sympathise, for sure. It's definitely frustrating to have issues with pressings, I've had it and it's a nightmare. I do think pressing plants have stepped up their game in the last few years, and it seems like they can handle it a little better than previously. I know there are a lot of people out there who think that Justin Bieber LPs and One Direction picture discs are the worst thing for what Record Store Day is, which also, I get… That's not my thing at all. However, a whole load of people love stuff like that. I think it should be viewed as an inclusive day for bringing all music fans together in an environment that's exciting and will introduce them to a world of sound they never knew. I pretty much 100% bought stuff I wouldn't dream of saying I ever owned now back when I was 10. It's the way of the world. We grow as people, our tastes change. If a 10-year-old kid wants to come in and get a Bieber LP from an independent record shop, I'm good with that. They will discover a whole bunch of insane other stuff in the long run, if they start going back to that indie shop they got that from."

"IF A 10-YEAR-OLD KID WANTS TO COME IN AND GET A BIEBER LP FROM AN INDEPENDENT RECORD SHOP, I'M GOOD WITH THAT"

AT "Cynicism is fine, it's par for the course in a hype-driven industry to have a backlash. But every year, there seem to be more people discovering RSD than deserting its cause. On the subject of 'eBay flippers' – a small minority of bad eggs, but what can you do? I really don't think it's as rife as the noise about it implies, and if someone spending hundreds of pounds on a bunch of releases wants to sell a big-ticket item to fund their purchase, who am I to prevent them? Buying purely to make a raise is mean and evil, though. No question. Maybe each shop could be issued with a lie-detector test to grill each customer before purchase…"

TB "It is bound to get some criticism and I listen to the naysayers' issues, which tend to be these points in general: price – things are too expensive. Yes, I agree that some things are expensive, and this is out of control for the independent shops, but in general, the items tend to keep their value well and usually increase, and there are some fantastic products issued, which tend to be very limited. People complain they can't order things – well, that is part of the hunt and how collectable the items are. Also, if we allowed people to pre-order items, we'd have no stock left to sell on the day and nobody would come to the shop, which would completely miss the point of the day. Flippers – this is where people come to buy things just to resell them at higher prices straight away. I know this annoys many people, but the only thing I can say is – don't pay the high prices. I know that the staff at ERA are closely monitoring the online auction sites such as eBay and try to bring the listings down. Also, we recommend people check out as many stores as they can – you'd be surprised what you can still find either later in the day, or after the day altogether, at other independent retailers at the original prices."

TD "It's a real labour of love, running a record shop… or indeed a label, of whatever size. I think naysayers should not bother turning up on that day but support the stores every other day – and indeed, a lot of great records are still available at those stores the very next day (assuming they open on a Sunday)!"

The Lovely Eggs play Vinyl Tap's Record Store Day 2018 launch party

ARE LABELS DOING ENOUGH TO SUPPORT RECORD STORE DAY? HOW DO THEY NEED TO CHANGE THEIR APPROACH?

AG "In general, yes. The biggest thing that they can do is keep producing good releases for us to sell on the day. The idea that it's all about a split between majors and indies is ill-judged, too. Major labels and indie labels produce strong and not-so-strong releases alike. The main thing is to keep it diverse, interesting and of a high standard. One great release from a little independent label has as much of a place as 10 from a bigger company; and that can't just be judged in sales terms – it's partly about capturing the spirit of the day."

JB "I think one thing a lot of shops think is there are too many releases, it's a drain, a real financial drain, and it is daunting, looking at 500 to 600 releases. Even taking one copy of everything, you're looking at potentially £8,000 outlay. And that is scary. But you just have to balance it. Some kind of small returns percentage on RSD stock could be a good thing from the labels, but at the same time, if 100 shops return something from a very small label, it can make or break that release or label. It is very complicated. I think generally, if all the labels can remain upbeat and promote their releases, tell people which shops will stock it, that's the best we can ask for, really. But as much as it's the label that should promote shops and releases, all us shops need to get behind releases on labels and push them out there, so people are aware."

AT "I think it would be a beautiful thing if labels encouraged their bands to take part on the day and got out to shops and connected with their fans (on both sides of the counter!). More artist involvement, for sure – in-stores, signings… We're all in this together, right? I think that some labels have really followed through in support of

> "MAYBE RECORD COMPANIES COULD SEND OUT THEIR ARTISTS"

independent record shops through exclusive pressings and pre-order incentives, and even dedicated listening events with giveaways, so there's lots of positives."

TB "In an ideal world, the labels will release superb product at good prices that music fans want, and there is enough to go round! The labels know that if they issue a top artist and only allow the shops one or two copies that the demand will be huge, so they have to be understanding. I remember a few years ago, we had one Arctic Monkeys purple vinyl 7" and could have easily sold 100 copies – so that meant a lot of disappointed punters. As shops, we want to make as many people as possible happy and give them a good experience that they remember… and make the profit that means we can survive."

TD "I guess this is one for the shops… We aren't doing a special release this year, as we didn't have anything that hit our utterly-essential-on-this-day-only criteria. In the past, we've done deluxe reissues of Neon Indian, as those records were highly in demand and sold out in their original pressings. We've done a 7" of Johnny Flynn's *Detectorists* theme tune, as it didn't fit on his album and is one of his most popular songs. We've reissued Bloc Party's debut single on red vinyl, which was £100-plus in its original press. We've done a super-deluxe live record from the Mystery Jets on gold vinyl with a poster and replica programme. We used it to launch our At The Drive-In reissue campaign, bringing records to vinyl for the first time in years, on stunning new masters and in a one-off colour… all things that we think are utterly vital. I think if more labels follow suit and really think about making a meaningful piece, rather than Phil Collins' *Face Value* on grey vinyl or whatever *again*, then it'll help."

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE RSD CHANGE AND DEVELOP?

AG "I would like to see shops get likeminded local businesses involved. I think it's essential to keep record labels engaged with the day – to encourage them to find their place within it, for the benefit of all. Every year throws out fresh challenges, we all just need to make sure that we do our best to cope with them. Record Store Day isn't perfect and never will be, but I still think that we all need it."

JB "At the moment, I'm kind of okay with where it is, to be honest. I would love it if stock arrived a little earlier from some distributors, so we don't have RSD releases showing up two days before, but that's generally not been too bad in the last few years… Basically, as little stress as possible is my top priority. If they can make it a little more relaxed (I have no idea how that's possible), then that'd be good."

AT "I don't think it needs to develop per se: if it did that too much, maybe it would be getting further away from the whole 'this is about/for independent record shops' remit. I think the key thing to maintaining its credibility and longevity is to curate the releases with care, rather than knocking any old reissue out and sticking an RSD sticker on it. Music is about creativity and imagination – we can do better than that! There's room for a bit of both, but integrity is key."

TB "One of the things we've tried to do is make the day more of an event, with bands playing and lots of local companies being involved, with freebies, etc, and just making it something special. This is one thing all the naysayers can't say anything bad about, as it is a music event and all that stuff is free for everyone – maybe some of the record companies could think about this as well and give us things to give out… and maybe even send out their artists to play around the country, to really make it a great day for physical music product."

TD "I think more support to indies and local labels, where possible, among the tent-pole items of Bowie 7"s would be great… but I also think it's obviously working, so that it just flourishes from year to year." ●

[PIAS] ACTION PRESTON • BADLANDS CHELTENHAM • BANQUET KINGSTON • BEATDOWN NEWCASTLE • BLACK CIRCLE LEIGHTON BUZZARD • BLACKEST RAINBOW SHEFFIELD • CASBAH GREENWICH • CODA PHONICA LONDON • POLAR BEAR BIRMINGHAM • PROBE LIVERPOOL • RAPTURE WITNEY • RAVES FROM THE GRAVE FROME • RECORD CORNER GODALMING • REFLEX NEWCASTLE • RELEVANT CAMBRIDGE • RESIDENT BRIGHTON • ROLLERCOASTER KILKENNY • ROUGH TRADE BRISTOL • ROUGH TRADE LONDON • ROUGH TRADE NOTTINGHAM • SEISMIC LEAMINGTON SPA • SISTER RAY LONDON • SLIDE BEDFORD • SOUNDCLASH NORWICH • SOUND IT OUT STOCKTON ON TEES • SOUND KNOWLEDGE MALBOROUGH • SOUNDS OF THE UNIVERSE LONDON • SOUTH SOUTHEND • SPILLERS CARDIFF • SPINDIZZY DUBLIN • SWORDFISH BIRMINGHAM • TALLBIRD CHELTENHAM • TOWER DUBLIN • TRANSMISSION MARGATE • TRUCK STORE OXFORD • UNDERGROUND SOLUTION EDINBURGH • VENUS VINYL LONDON • VINYL COLLECTORS SALISBURY • VINYL HUNTER BURY ST EDMUNDS • WAH WAH RECORDS WAKEFIELD • WHARF RECORDS WHITBY • WHITE NOISE BRIGHTON • WOOLY MAMMOTH BURY • LOST IN VINYL CAMBRIDGE • MOLD RECORD SHOP MOLD • MONORAIL GLASGOW • MUSIC NOT DEAD BEXHILL ON SEA • NIGHTFLY RECORDS UXBRIDGE • NORMANS LEEDS • PEBBLE EASTBOURNE • PICCADILLY MANCHESTER • PIE & VINYL SOUTHSEA • PIE & VINYL SOUTHSEA ESTERFILED • TOWER DUBLIN • TRANSMISSION MARGATE • TRUCK STORE OXFORD • UNDERGROUND SOLUTION EDINBURGH • VENUS VINYL LONDON • VINYL COLLECTORS SALISBURY • VINYL HUNTER BURY ST EDMUNDS • WAH WAH RECORDS WAKEFIELD • WHARF RECORDS WHITBY • WHITE NOISE BRIGHTON • WOOLY MAMMOTH BURY • LOST IN VINYL CAMBRIDGE • MOLD RECORD SHOP MOLD • MONORAIL GLASGOW • MUSIC NOT DEAD BEXHILL ON SEA • NIGHTFLY RECORDS UXBRIDGE • NORMANS LEEDS • PEBBLE EASTBOURNE • PICCADILLY MANCHESTER • PIE & VINYL SOUTHSEA • RECORD CORNER GODALMING • REFLEX NEWCASTLE • RELEVANT CAMBRIDGE • RESIDENT BRIGHTON • ROLLERCOASTER KILKENNY • ROUGH TRADE BRISTOL • ROUGH TRADE LONDON • ROUGH TRADE NOTTINGHAM • SEISMIC LEAMINGTON SPA • SISTER RAY LONDON • SLIDE BEDFORD • SOUNDCLASH NORWICH • SOUND IT OUT STOCKTON ON TEES • SOUND KNOWLEDGE MALBOROUGH • SOUNDS OF THE UNIVERSE LONDON • SOUTH SOUTHEND • SPILLERS CARDIFF • SPINDIZZY DUBLIN • SWORDFISH BIRMINGHAM • TALLBIRD CHELTENHAM

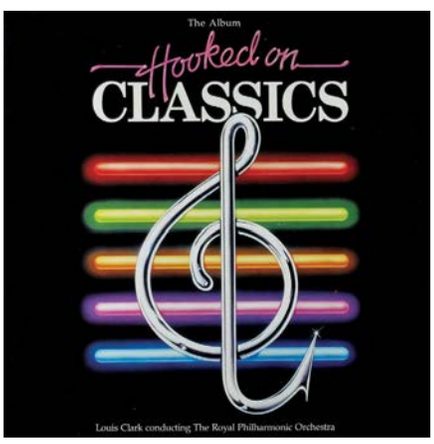
WHY I LOVE...

Louis Clark Conducting The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
Hooked On Classics

ANDREW W.K.

This issue, *Why Vinyl Matters* author **Jennifer Otter Bickerdike** quizzes hard-partying singer-songwriter, TV host, author and motivational speaker Andrew W.K. about the album that changed his perception of music when he was a child – and discovers what vinyl means to him…

"It's quite challenging to remember exactly what the first record I bought for myself was. I was purchasing records from a very young age, with my parents' money, allowance, or cash I made babysitting. The first vinyl album I remember asking to have was USA For Africa performing *We Are The World*. I was six years old. I saw that footage of all of the artists and celebrities singing on TV. I'd always been very moved by choirs, groups of people singing and vocal classes at school. I asked my mum if we go could go get it.



That was the first time I remember hearing music and seeking it out.

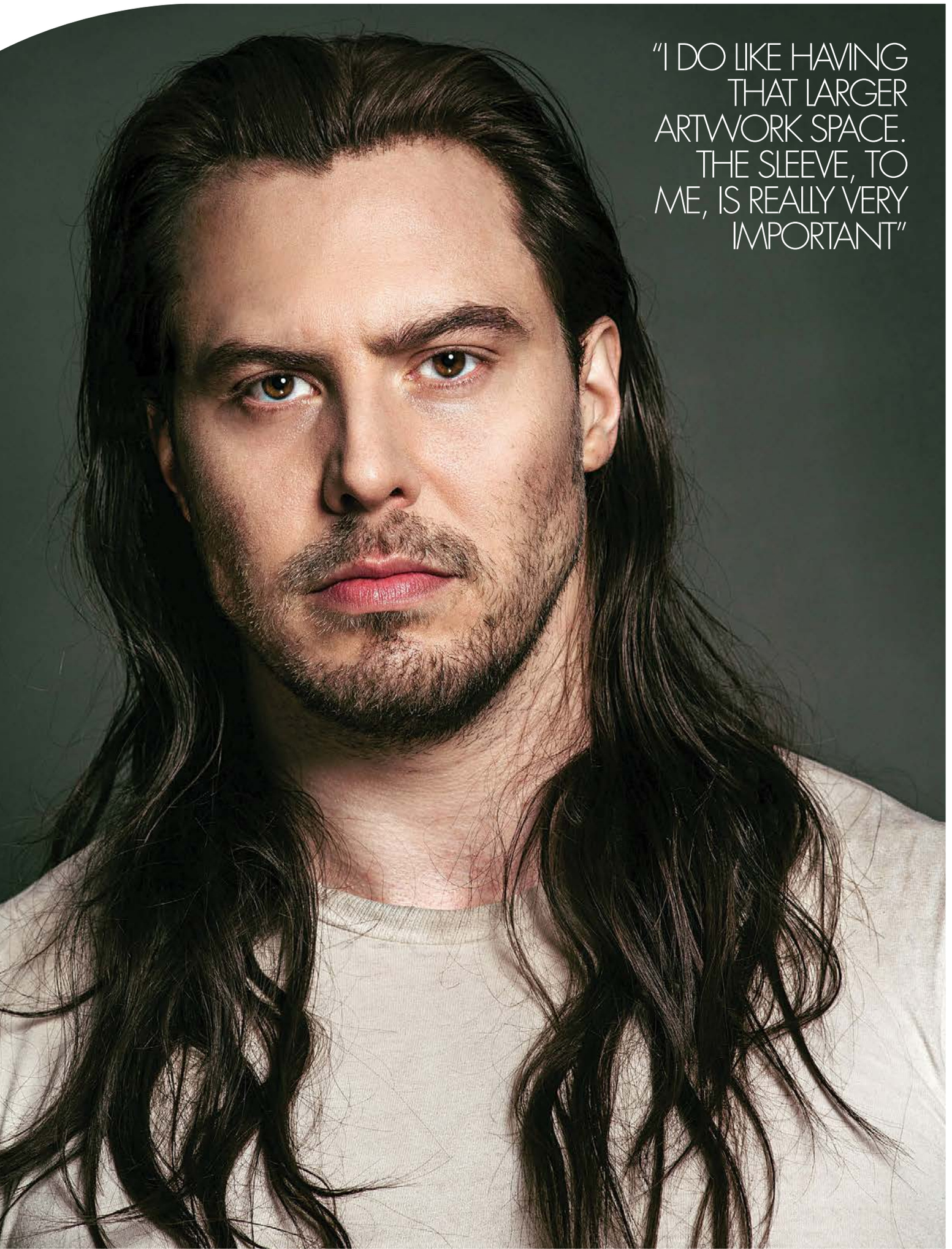
"Growing up, my parents had a lot of records, but I do have a very clear memory of one particular album. When I was four, we moved from California, where I was born, to Michigan, where I had my formative childhood years. My dad must have been setting up the stereo system for the first time, because we were unpacking and moving into this new house. There was this one album, I think it was called *Hooked On Classics* from K-Tel. It's an instrumental record, with very popular motifs from many orchestral pieces set to this disco beat. I remember running around the house with a small inflatable toy basketball. It was like a soundtrack to this imaginary, high-stakes drama that only I was playing. I got chills when it kicked into this sort of intense, romantic section of *Rhapsody In Blue*."

MELODIC CHANGES

"I was just really amazed by how much the music changed the way I was, physically. These melodies and the intervals of these notes could change the way your body felt. That instrumental, the really melodic-driven portion, the sound of these people playing together: even though there weren't voices, there was a human presence in that. The artwork on that was quite striking; it was this neon-coloured treble-clef staff from sheet music. It's not very interesting, but it's very memorable.

"With Andrew W.K., we put every record out on vinyl. In terms of my peer group, it just wasn't really a question. People were always making 7"s and vinyl. There was never a real falling away of that format, from my experience. But there wasn't a big market for it, so when we made them, we didn't do a large number.

"Now it's quite exciting to see more pressing plants opening and the quality of records increasing; it's great. I do like having that larger artwork space. The sleeve, to me, is really very important. One of the best parts about getting to make an album is getting to work with that space, and what kind of impression you can give someone from the cover or the inside. The more surfaces you have to work with, the better. For me, that's the best part about it." ●


"I DO LIKE HAVING THAT LARGER ARTWORK SPACE. THE SLEEVE, TO ME, IS REALLY VERY IMPORTANT"

HIGH TIDE

She was the Soul Queen of the mod scene, a fixture of Swinging London, a revered solo artist and backing singer extraordinaire. **Garth Cartwright** speaks to P.P. Arnold about her tragedy-tinged yet glittering career in music, and her new album…

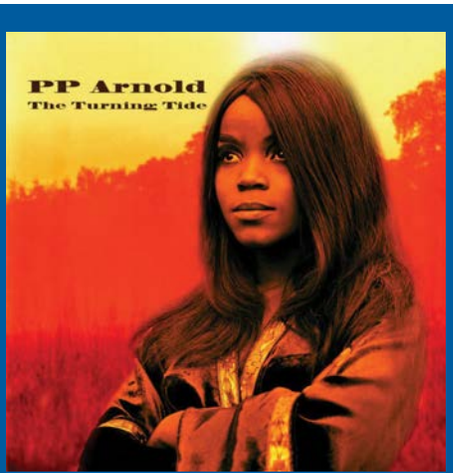
P.P. Arnold groans when we call her "a 60s legend". P.P. – "Call me Pat" – then states: "I certainly don't have the fortune that comes with being a 'legend'. Still, I'm pleased I got to do what I did. And that I can still do it!"

Do it, Arnold most certainly can. For a long time, she's found herself wearing various labels – Mod Queen, Swinging London's Soul Siren, The Female Small Face – but in 2017, she launched a comeback very few of us expected. This involved the release of *The Turning Tide*, an album Arnold had recorded over a series of sessions stretching from 1969 to 1972. The initial sessions were produced by Barry Gibb. Then Eric Clapton took over. Session guitarist Caleb Quayle produced two tunes. The resulting album was supposed to be released on RSO – the label owned by Robert Stigwood, the magnate who oversaw both the Bee Gees' and Clapton's rise to superstardom. Yet Stigwood chose to sit on Arnold's magnificent music, having little idea how to market a singer who straddled soul and rock.

Arnold's life took many twists and turns after Stigwood stymied what should have been her breakthrough album. Leaving London for Los Angeles, then moving to Miami, proved unsatisfying – "I'm unknown in the US" – and she returned to London in the 1980s. Since then, Arnold has continued to tour, record, sing in musicals and lend her soulful vocals to everyone from Steel Pulse to Roger Waters – all the while trying to get *The Turning Tide* released.

"I knew how good those sessions were," she says of the unreleased recordings, "and I was determined that my fans hear them. I had no power in the music industry, but then Steve Cradock and his wife Sally determined that they'd help me, and this changed everything."

Patricia Ann Cole was born and raised in Watts, South Central Los Angeles. Watts is now notorious for riots and gangsta rap but, back then, she notes, "it was a beautiful place to live". Singing gospel in church found the congregation recognising her talent. "When I sang, it made people happy and, from the age of four, I liked that."



P.P. ARNOLD ON VINYL

Arnold's debut solo album, *The First Lady Of Immediate*, was released in 1967 and her sophomore effort *Kafunta* in 1968. To find an original copy (in very good condition) of *The First Lady…* will cost a fair whack. *Kafunta* is more obtainable. Arnold released six 45s on Immediate – the first, *Everything's Gonna Be Alright/Life Is But Nothing*, was not a hit and thus makes it P.P.'s most collectable disc. 1969 saw Arnold's debut Polydor 45 *Bury Me Down By The River Side*, but it and 1970 Polydor 45 *A Likely Piece Of Work* both failed to chart (the former is readily available, while the latter is rarer and thus more pricey). This failure, and Stigwood's indifference to Arnold, sent her into the wilderness and P.P. would not release a record under her own name until the mid 1980s, when she cut a handful of 45s for different labels, none of them finding an audience. In 2007, the album *Five In The Afternoon* – credited to Dr. Robert & P.P. Arnold – came out on CD with little fanfare. It was reissued on LP for Record Store Day 2017 and is worthy of attention for P.P. collectors. *The Turning Tide* sounds magnificent on vinyl and is widely available.

In the mid 60s, P.P. Arnold hitched a ride with the Ike & Tina Turner Revue to sign a record deal in London

SOUL SURVIVORS

Getting pregnant aged 15 suddenly meant Arnold was no longer welcome in church and, by 17, she was living with her abusive husband and two toddlers while working two jobs. One Sunday, the phone rang.

"It's Maxine Smith and Gloria Scott, two girls I knew who were determined to make it as soul singers. Now, they wanted to go and audition for Ike and Tina and they knew I could sing. I said I couldn't go, but Maxine wouldn't take no for an answer, she insisted and told me to tell David, my husband, a lie," Arnold recalls. "I did… I said I was going shopping, and then I'm at Ike and Tina's house. "Tina liked how I sang right away. They invited me to ride with them to see their show that night and I said if I did so, my husband would beat me. Tina suggested that as he was going to beat me whatever I did, I might as well come see the show. I went with them and, boy, were they phenomenal!

"When I got home late, he hit me. I took my kids to my parents, then went out on the road with Ike and Tina. I knew here was the opportunity to do something for myself and my children. But it was difficult at the start. See, I was so shy, I was introverted. And Tina emphasised that I had to project as a singer and performer if I wanted to hold onto the job. Tina told me to sing and perform as if I was hanging out with my girlfriends and having a good time. And I took that advice to heart."

Life on the road with the Ike & Tina Turner Revue was a challenge in every sense.

"To me, it looked like Tina was living the dream. Then, once we were touring, I realised that although she had helped me get out of an abusive relationship, she herself was stuck in one. And Ike, he had about four women on the go at any one time. He even had his concubine he took on tour. He was a great bandleader and musician, but he was not a great human being. And we'd go out on these

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Arnold's vocals have graced releases ranging from Ike & Tina to The KLF

P.P. ARNOLD – BACKING SINGER

Any fan hoping to collect P.P. Arnold's complete recordings has a huge task in front of them – the tiny lady with the huge voice has sung on thousands of sessions. "I sing on half of Ike & Tina's *River Deep – Mountain High* LP, not the Spector-produced stuff, the Ike stuff. Then I started singing sessions as soon as I was signed to Immediate," says Arnold. "That's me on *Tin Soldier* and *Itchycoo Park*." Once Immediate collapsed, P.P. began singing on sessions as her main earner. She's on 1970's original-cast album for *Jesus Christ Superstar*. That year, she also sang harmony vocal on Nick Drake's *Poor Boy* and joined Doris Troy and Mick Jagger in contributing backing vocals to Dr. John's *The Sun, Moon & Herbs*. In1971, she teamed up with Steve Marriott again for Humble Pie's *Rock On*. Graham Nash's *Songs For Beginners*, Nils Lofgren's *Cry Tough* and Freddie King's *Burglar* all feature her. Arnold returned to the UK in time to sing on Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer* and *Big Time*. Roger Waters features Arnold on 1992's *Amused To Death* (and took her on the road for a decade). There are many other cameos – from Eric Burdon and Steel Pulse to The KLF – featuring Arnold's magnificent voice.

90-day tours and be working maybe 87 of those days. Once we hit the South, we worked the Chitlin' Circuit and segregation was still in force, so we were often having to sleep on the bus – and this was not a bus like today's ones, but an old, rattly bus. It was tough. And you had to be good to hold that job because, in the US, singers are a-dime-a-dozen. But I held onto it, because it was a way out."

In 1966, The Rolling Stones invited the Ike & Tina Revue to support them on their European tour. Again, Arnold's life was about to change. "While on tour, I got on great with The Rolling Stones. This surprised everyone, including me, because I was 'shy Pat' and here I was hanging out with these white rock 'n' rollers. And in South Central LA, black girls and white guys definitely did not hang out and party together! While they spoke English here, it was a different kind of English to what we spoke. And I found the culture completely different. I went from the Civil Rights revolution in the US to the rock 'n' roll revolution in England."

IMMEDIATE UPTURN

"Ike got insanely jealous over my friendship with the Stones," says Arnold. "I was being treated like royalty! – and I mentioned to Mick one time that, when I got back to the States, I was going to leave Ike and Tina because Ike was getting crazier and crazier. Mick then asked if I was interested in signing to Immediate Records. The deal offered was that he would produce half my album and Andrew Loog Oldham would produce the other half. And that's exactly what happened. I rang my mom and told her about the offer and we agreed she would raise my children for six months and then, either I would come back to LA or, if things had worked out in London, I would collect the children and bring them to live with me in London."

Co-founded by Andrew Loog Oldham and Tony Calder, Immediate Records was a hip independent label: the Small Faces fled Decca for Immediate, while Rod Stewart, Nico and Chris Farlowe were all signed. Oldham gave Arnold songs by Marriott-Lane and the then-unknown Cat Stevens (Arnold's version of his *The First Cut Is The Deepest* is the original and best, and her biggest hit).

"THE DEAL WAS MICK JAGGER WOULD PRODUCE HALF MY LP; ANDREW LOOG OLDHAM WOULD PRODUCE THE OTHER HALF"

By 1967, P.P. Arnold was the black female face of Swinging London. "I knew nothing about the music business at the time and, of course, I got royally ripped off, but it was all a great experience for me," she says. "Gered Mankowitz captured my innocence in those photos, and I got to meet the Small Faces and we got on fabulously. I fitted into their musical vibe, because I was into Stax and Motown and so were they."

There's a fabulous YouTube video of Arnold and the Small Faces roaring through *Tin Soldier* "from a Belgian TV show", which demonstrates the wild, soulful energies brought about when Arnold and the East End band joined forces.

"It was exciting times! Steve Marriott and I really hit it off, we were soul brother, soul sister," Arnold recalls. "He loved the way I sang and I loved the way he sang. He was just hyper in everything he did and we became lovers. He was the first British guy ever to take me home to meet his family."

Jimi Hendrix settled in London around the same time as Arnold. We ask, did Pat get to know Jimi? "Jimi? Oh, he's another soul brother and lover!" she laughs and adds: "Everybody had more than one lover back then. We had multiple lovers! I'm so pleased AIDS wasn't around back then." Arnold then adds: "Jimi was quite shy and very talented. To me, he was a very nice guy."

Arnold scored several UK hits and released two strong LPs but, by the time the late 60s arrived, Immediate was imploding and she found herself without a recording deal or any royalties.

"I finally got some of the money I was owed in 1992," she says. "Not all of it. I'll never see that. Tony Calder was a big-time crook, a gangster, really. At the time, I was so naïve I didn't know how to fight for my money. Now, well, I've learnt how to fight, alright."

TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

Pat learnt the hard way, and the unreleased Stigwood sessions saw her seemingly disappearing in the 1970s – as if a voice this great had suddenly been silenced. The mod revival once again showed she commanded a loyal following.

Not that Arnold was inactive; it's just many only associated her with her Immediate recordings. "I really got to stretch out (on *The Turning Tide*). People only know me from my Immediate records, which are very cute, very pop. Here, I'm showing my gospel roots and doing songs like *Medicated Goo* and *Brand New Day*."

P.P. Arnold never got rich. She's been ripped off and passed over, tragically lost her teenage daughter to a car accident and experienced plenty of pain and frustration. Yet she's never lost belief in herself or her music. And today, at 71, this ensures she is a genuine soul survivor. "Having kids definitely saved me – it grounded me. A lot of the people I was friendly with from that era died too young. And I put it down to drugs-drugs-drugs."

With a new, Steve Cradock-produced, album set for release in late 2018 and her autobiography, *The First Cut Is The Deepest*, due out at the same time, the Queen Of Mod is ready to reclaim her throne.

"Magical things do happen to me," says Arnold. "I think there's a spiritual way that keeps me safe." ●

Arnold has her autobiography and a new album, produced by Steve Cradock, on the way this year

Image: Sandra Vijandi -Handel & Hendrix Museum

P.P. ARNOLD ON MOD RECORD SHOPS

Having *The Turning Tide* out on vinyl allowed Arnold to engage again in one of her favourite pastimes: playing records. "I love putting on a record and listening to it. I think CDs served their purpose, but records are more fun, more beautiful, so I'm happy vinyl has returned." As we chat about Swinging London, I ask whether Arnold recalls any particular Mod record shops. "In London, there were certain record shops that I loved to frequent. Soul City in Covent Garden was one, because that guy [the late Dave Godin] had all the new R&B releases from the US. Musicland in Soho [Berwick Street] was another cool shop. And in Mayfair, there was One Stop Records [South Molton Street]. I loved that shop! Jimi also used to do a lot of his record shopping there. One Stop was close to where we used to live and it was very hip. I also used the big HMV store on Oxford Street. I loved stacking up my 45s on my Dansette and playing them one after the other."

IRRESISTIBLE FORCE

Following on from ill-founded rumours that 2014's *Futurology* may have been the final Manic Street Preachers album, the Welsh trio have released a youthful new record – *Resistance Is Futile*. **Laura Williams** chats to frontman James Dean Bradfield to find out more about their return to the fray…

When *Long Live Vinyl* catches up with Manic Street Preachers frontman James Dean Bradfield, the notion of age and an ever-changing society crops up regularly during our hour-long chat – and it's a prevalent theme that also accounts for the provocative title of the band's new album.

"We're a bunch of 49-year-olds, there is no point in pretending otherwise," explains James. "This is our 13th album. When we first started as a band, there was no such thing as a download; CDs still felt new; you couldn't buy bottled water in The Valleys in Wales; none of us had a mobile phone. It's a timelapse in terms of culture and general change around you as you get older.

"Our records now get played on Radio 2 – if you'd have told me that in 1992, I wouldn't have believed you; if you'd have told me that people find it hard to listen to albums full-stop now, I wouldn't have believed you; if you'd have told me that an iconic standalone good guitarist has not arrived in this world for the last 10 years, I wouldn't have believed you… It's all low attention spans and general cultural attention deficit disorder. Everything has changed. Once you come to terms with all those things, you think 'fuck it, we're just gonna do what we do'. Resistance is futile."

Describing the new album as "youthful and juvenile", he points to its "naïve optimism". Musically, it follows the strident melodic formula which the band has followed in recent years – and this is no accident. James, who never streams or downloads music himself, says: "The one thing I don't want to do on an album anymore is have an album track that is too indulgent, too long or lacks form. If people find it hard to listen to albums all the way through now, just make an obsession with melody your *modus operandi* – drench it in that melody that we've kind of always been a bit obsessed with."

The album's influences are as broad as the band's growing fanbase; from composer Anna Meredith's *Nautilus* track to The War On Drugs' *A Deeper Understanding* album. "You just want music to make you move," says James. "You want to be dragged along with it. You want it to be relentless. *International Blue* is relentless in the sense that it's charging towards something hopeful."

International Blue is the first single from the album, with lyrics that were never supposed to be on a Manics track. James explains: "About five years ago, Nick went to Nice for his wedding anniversary. They were visiting the Yves Klein museum and he kind of wrote an extended haiku. When I was nagging him for more lyrics, he said, 'I have got this thing I wrote, but it was never meant to be a Manic Street Preachers song', and I snatched it from his hand. I was desperate for words."

He continues: "*International Blue* shocked us when it started taking shape, and we

JAMES DEAN BRADFIELD'S VINYL PICKS

When it comes to vinyl, the Manics' frontman listens to a "very strange" selection of stuff on a "crap little record player" (his words, not ours). Here are some of his favourites…

Satelliti
Transister
"Electro-jazz with a very organic, heavy, damp band behind it… it's hard to explain it. A band from Italy. I listen to that a lot."

Rory Gallagher
Irish Tour '74
"I've got a reissue of Rory Gallagher's *Irish Tour '74*. It's a vinyl set with three LPs – LPs, that's a word you don't hear much these days."

The Cult
Dreamtime
"I was a massive Cult fan when I was young. *Dreamtime* is the album before *Love*. I have the free live album, *Live At The Lyceum*, that came with it as well."

Ellen Foley
Spirit Of St. Louis
"I like obscure stuff like this, which was produced by Mick Jones of The Clash, or, as it says on the record sleeve, as produced by 'my boyfriend'. I think Ellen Foley was the woman who sang on Meatloaf's *Bat Out Of Hell* [she sang on *Paradise By The Dashboard Light*]."

Frank Sinatra
Strangers In The Night
"Something I always listen to is *Strangers In The Night* by Frank Sinatra. It's one of my mum's old LPs and is the best Sinatra album, in my estimation. I play that a lot."

Billy Preston
I Wrote A Simple Song
"This is an album I've had for three decades now and have played a lot. I bought it second-hand when I was in my teens and I've always loved it. It's one of those little novelties."

Discos De Las Brigadas Internacionales
6 Songs For Democracy
"This was a present from Rob Stringer (Sony CEO) over 20 years ago. He got us one each. It was published in America in 1940, so the records play at 78. The inside cover is signed by Paul Robeson, so it's an amazing little artefact which I play a lot, it's really treasured. They're just songs of freedom really connected to the national brigade in Spain for the Spanish Civil War. It's surprisingly calming."

Various Artists
Times Square OST
"I listen to a lot of soundtracks, including the one from *Times Square*. We did a cover of *Damn Dog* by Robin Johnson from this. It's got *Grinding Halt* by The Cure, *Pissing In A River* by The Patti Smith Group and a brilliant song called *Your Daughter Is One* by Robin Johnson and Trini Alvarado."

Deke Leonard
Iceberg
"Deke Leonard was the guitarist from the Welsh band Man, who passed away last year. He went on to form Iceberg. I've been listening to that a lot recently."

UFO
Lights Out
"I'm a bit of a late convert to UFO. Nick was a massive UFO fan when we were young. I never was, but I realised I've got a shedload of old UFO albums in my collection. I've been listening to *Lights Out* a lot."

didn't have to do much to form it. It came to us naturally. And we thought, 'If that's still what's in us, in a natural sense, let's just go with it'. It gave us a bit of a rush."

Unlike many bands who stick to the familiar personal experiences of love and loss when approaching lyrics, the Manics have a long and rich track record of taking inspiration from politics, history and art – aided by late lyricist Richey James' ferocious curiosity and current wordsmith Nicky Wire's frequently outspoken and often insightful world view.

LYRICAL DIVERSITY

Over the years, the Manics have tackled some difficult subjects in their songs – from anorexia and suicide to the Holocaust and the Spanish Civil War. James, who writes the music alongside cousin and drummer bandmate Sean Moore, has nurtured an incredible ability to squeeze the most complex lines into soaring sections, with song titles you could barely fit into a tweet; the likes of *If You Tolerate This Then Your Children Will Be Next* and *Ifwhiteamericatoldthetruth foronedayit'sworldwouldfallapart*.

But James says his job is much easier these days: "The whole serendipitous nature of our band is that we've known each other for so long that we have so many of the same sensibilities and likes," he says, "and when we don't agree on something – be it a record or sport – we just argue and talk about it.

"I would never make the claim to completely and utterly lock into every line of a lyric I've ever been given by Nick and Richey, but I get the sense of it. There were a few times on *The Holy Bible* where I had to ask a lot more questions, because some of them were observations of darker spaces which people inhabited. Like 'I 'T' them 24-7 all year long', I wanted to know what 'T' was.

"After *The Holy Bible* and some lines off the first album, anything else is a walk in the park. Take the opening couplet of *International Blue*: "You wrote your autograph on the far side of the sky/ You recorded the falling rain but you never told us why" – if someone found that hard to sing, I'd think they were a bit of an idiot."

As with a lot of Manics album covers – such as the unmistakable Jenny Saville watercolour cover of 1994's *The Holy Bible* – the image used for *Resistance Is Futile* is both powerful and poignant. James says: "Nick will have something percolating in his head and usually that's the title of the album; that guides me on the moods I want to write in

and it also guides him towards an image." After an expedition through digital archives, photography books and art pamphlets, Nick found three incredible final photographs of *The Last Samurai* – one of which instantly jumped out as the album cover. "We love the double-edged nature of the image," said James, "knowing that the photo's captured something which is in its death throes, but with that stubborn resistance. There's a look in his eyes which you can never extinguish."

"THERE AREN'T ENOUGH PRESSING PLANTS IN BRITAIN TO KEEP UP WITH DEMAND, SO YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE THINGS FINISHED EVEN EARLIER. WE CUT THE VINYL FOR *RESISTANCE IS FUTILE* BEFORE CHRISTMAS"

BY THE RIVER

The album took the equivalent of just five-to-six weeks to make, spread over a number of years thanks to losing their Faster Studios in Cardiff to "the ceaseless march of progress". The record's release was put back by a week due to a delay with the vinyl pressing.

"The one downside of the vinyl revival," says James, "is that you've got to have things prepared so much more up-front now. There are not enough pressing plants in Britain to keep up with demand, so the queuing gets longer and now you've got to have things finished even earlier. We cut the vinyl before Christmas. I brought those test pressings home and listened to them several times on my little old Teac, which I use a lot and love. It's very, very true. I still hear different things when I listen to it on vinyl, which is good."

The records James listens to are diverse, ranging from Michael Schenker to Gemma Hayes and including a wave of old indie 7"s from the likes of The Jasmine Minks, World Of Twist and Big Flame. "I tend to compartmentalise what I listen to on vinyl," he says. "Once I get in front of the record player, I only want to hear certain things. It forces me to listen to music that I don't listen to in any other place."

Listening to records also features heavily in the band's regime at their new Door To The River studio, which James describes as a 'youth club'. "We set up a studio because we needed a clubhouse," says the father-of-two. "Sometimes, we don't play a note of music, we go in and have a bitch and a moan and watch *Countdown*, literally. We've got loads of vinyl there and we just listen to music.

"We tend to listen to a lot of older stuff on vinyl, just 'cause you can trust it a lot more. Successive masterings change your sonic

The Manics' 13th album is set against a backdrop of what Bradfield calls: "a timelapse in terms of culture and general change around you as you get older"

memory of some of these records. Some of the mastering is amazing, especially some of the Led Zeppelin stuff; but sometimes, especially if you're an idiot musician like me and you spend a lot of time listening to sounds, you put a remastering on and you're like, 'Wow, the drums are nothing like I remember', and you go back and put your old album on and you go, 'Ah – there they are.'"

When asked how he buys records, James spits: "I never fucking order online". Instead, he's a regular customer at Spillers in Cardiff and, previously, Martin Luther Records in his hometown of Blackwood.

"Sometimes, you'd order a record and it would take a month to come back, but it

"YOU'D GO DOWN ON SATURDAY WITH A DINNER-TICKET-STYLE ORDER SLIP TO PICK UP YOUR ORDER. IT CAME IN AN AMAZING BAG, IT WAS AN EAGLE FLYING AGAINST THE SUN"

was such a brilliant wait," he says. "You'd go down on Saturday with a dinner-ticket-style order slip to pick up your order. I remember it came in an amazing bag, it was an eagle flying against the sun. Spillers are great, they tend to get things in within a week."

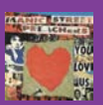
James says that Nick's the one with the full Manics back catalogue on vinyl, while his collection has some semi-deliberate gaps. "Some people may hold us up in the vinyl court for the picture discs that came out around *Generation Terrorists*. And there was a picture disc that had a single tape cassette of *Suicide Is Painless* just Sellotaped onto the front of the vinyl." He laughs at the absurdity of such a move. "Ah, those were the days…"

Resistance Is Futile is out on black, limited-edition red and limited-edition white vinyl. ●

EARLY MANICS RARITIES ON VINYL

Suicide Alley
Self-released, 1988
Only 300 copies of the first ever Manics single were made, self-financed and self-pressed by the band as they started their 30-plus-year career. Recorded at a studio in Blackwood, this version has never been officially released on any other format. Circa £100.

New Art Riot EP
Damaged Goods, 1990
Several vinyl versions of this debut EP were released, including a pink marbled-effect one. The rarest version is a 12" white-label promo, in a plain sleeve rubber-stamped with 'Made In Wales'. The original black-and-white one was a limited-edition run of 1,000 copies with 'Distributed by 9 Mile Cartel' on the back sleeve. Prices vary.



You Love Us
Heavenly, 1991
A rare test pressing, available a year before Columbia released it as part of *Generation Terrorists'* singles schedule. In 2016, the band donated a copy for auction to raise money for Cardiff's Velindre Cancer Centre – years after donating a copy of *Suicide Alley* for the same end. It fetched hundreds.

Feminine Is Beautiful
CAFF Corporation, 1991
Ultra-rare single released by Heavenly labelmates Saint Etienne's Bob Stanley's CAFF Corporation fanzine. Just 500 copies were pressed as a third-generation cassette recording, so sound quality isn't great, but it's collectable, fetching up to £300.

Motown Junk
Heavenly, 1991
Motown Junk is one of a handful of singles or lead songs from EPs which don't appear on any Manics albums (other than the *Lipstick Traces…* B-sides and rarities album). The original UK release of this belter is accompanied by another two tracks – *Sorrow 16* and *We Her Majesty's Prisoners*. Expect to pay £50 or more.

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TREE OF LIFE

Wye Oak's sixth record, *The Louder I Call, The Faster It Runs*, finds the Baltimore duo at the peak of their powers. **Laura Barton** speaks to frontwoman Jenn Wasner about the band's writing process, her other music projects and her record collection…

Some years ago, when her life was more in flux, Jenn Wasner placed the bulk of her possessions into storage and took up residency in a warehouse. It was, one imagines, a weightless time – this was in the early days of her band, Wye Oak, and her attention rested on the challenges of writing, recording and touring her music, rather than the responsibility of belongings.

It was only later that she learned that everything in her storage facility had been destroyed. In the years since, she's tried not to dwell on what was lost. "I put a block in my brain," she says. "Because if I thought about specific things, I'd get really sad. But yes, I'm sure there were some records that I will probably never be able to replace in there. And that's unfortunate."

What it means is that, these days, Wasner's record collection numbers perhaps just 150 records – a strikingly slender haul for someone who's spent the last 12 years working in music – with Wye Oak and Dungeonesse, as well as her solo project, Flock Of Dimes. "I've slowly built it back up," she says. "And it doesn't go super-deep, but it's fairly split between gems that friends have given me over the years and classic records."

Wasner has just turned 32. Raised in the era of CDs, she grew up in a home in which there was a record collection, but no record player. "I was really fascinated with these records as physical objects and as these weird little artefacts, but I don't think I realised that this wasn't just a picture, this was how people listened to music until much, much later," she recalls. The pivotal moment came when she was 12 years old, and her uncle gave her Joni Mitchell's *Blue* on CD. "And I remember then finding a copy of that on record in my parents' collection, and that was when I put the pieces together."

Joni Mitchell has remained a dominant force in Wasner's musical life. She points to the track *You Of All People* on Wye Oak's newly released sixth album, *The Louder I Call, The Faster It Runs*. "For me, it's so obvious that it's inspired by Joni Mitchell," she says. "Other people don't necessarily hear it, but it's one of the songs on this record where I said intentionally, 'I'm going to use alternate tunings', which is something she was notorious for. I've been doing that since I was a kid, because what I'm drawn to about the guitar is the malleability of it; I'm self-taught and ear-trained and it's been endlessly compelling to me."

Wasner formed Wye Oak with drummer and keyboardist Andy Stack in the mid-2000s, part of a Baltimore scene that included Future Islands and Beach House, and long sat below the radar. Quietly, their sound has gathered a power and sophistication, moving from simpler indie rock to become something more restless, and rapturous and synth-driven. *The Louder I Call, The Faster It Runs* is stunning, and is more experimental and adventurous than its predecessors. Its sonic ambition is in part due to the fact that Stack and Wasner now live at some geographical distance – something that would prove problematic to many bands, but for Wye Oak, has enabled the pair's sound to develop in unexpected ways.

> "THIS TIME, WE SAID, 'EVERYTHING IS ON THE TABLE. NOTHING IS OFF'"

ALONE AGAIN, OR...

"It allows us to work alone together," Wasner explains. "From a writing standpoint, for me, I need a lot of space and privacy to go into that part of my brain that I have to. It's like a very vulnerable, weird, private space initially, and then you have to sculpt that into something you can deal with sharing with the world. And so working separately gives us space while we're in that very initial creative phase, and then we can pass things back and forth and watch them grow and expand in ways we never would have anticipated just on our own."

Certainly, this album has a greater sense of expansion than ever before; a fact Wasner credits to the fact that she and Stack began its recording with a decision to lift all restrictions. "In the past, we'd gone into record-making processes giving ourselves some sort of expectation, or a demand or a limitation to help the writing process along," she explains. "But this was the first time we started the process saying, 'everything is on the table. Nothing is off'. I could write on any instrument I pleased. So it opened up ▶

the palette a little bit. And at this point in our careers, we feel as if we're operating at the height of what we're capable of. So it didn't feel as intimidating as it maybe would have in the past. We just let it all be available to us."

Wasner can trace her decision to become a musician back to that day when she was 12, with the gift of Joni Mitchell's *Blue*, and with it, a copy of Bob Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks*. "I remember it vividly," she says. "Not a bad way to start thinking about songs! And that's really what I did – I started thinking about songs and the people who made them." She was compelled by the fact that on both of those records, the faces and names of the songwriters were printed on the sleeve. "There was no mistaking: this person made this thing," she remembers. "And I think that was the first time in my life that I thought, 'I can do that; I want to make songs.'"

It's a strange fact, then, that Wasner herself has never recorded under her own name – concealing herself in duos (in Dungeonesse she records with Jon Ehrens of White Life), or under pseudonyms. "I'm not necessarily opposed to it," she says. "But there are a few reasons why I've avoided it so far. One is that there is a certain amount of baggage that comes with the singer-songwriter label when you're a woman, that I've always feared because I feel like it's extremely limiting and it provides a context for your music that I didn't want. And so I feel that operating under a band name or a pseudonym put some distance between my existence as a young woman who plays instruments and who maybe does want to write songs, but doesn't necessarily want to be confined to that space of 'singer-songwriter.'"

It's perplexing, she says, that the term 'singer-songwriter' should imply something so different for a female artist. "There's a lot to it, and I could go on about it all day, but if you're trying to condense it down, it's that artistically, creatively, aesthetically, women do not get the benefit of the doubt," she explains, voice gathering urgency. "Someone is always trying to pass off their artistry to someone else, or to assume that their songs are personal or confessional, because these are the ways that we've been trained to think about the kind of art that women make."

> "ARTISTICALLY, CREATIVELY, AESTHETICALLY, WOMEN DO NOT GET THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT"

THE POWER OF PSEUDONYMS

Even as a teenager, Wasner was aware of this imbalance. "Though I didn't really have the vocabulary to talk about it like I do now, I noticed in my record collection who had the credibility and who got the benefit of the doubt," she says. "So someone like one of my favourite songwriters of all time, Bill Callahan, he has this aura of mystery and he gets a lot of the benefit of the doubt for what he does. I think the way that we consider him and his work would be very different if he were a woman with an acoustic guitar."

When Wasner first heard Callahan's music, he was recording under the pseudonym Smog, and so she decided to follow his lead. "I thought, 'If I'm going to have people consider my art the way I want them to, I can't use my name,'" she recalls. "I thought, 'I can't be a 'singer-songwriter'. I can't go out and play acoustic guitar at a coffee shop.' And now I understand where all that baggage comes from, and it makes me really sad and resentful, because I think I've spent a long time running from who I am and what I actually want to make because of that shame that was put on me from outside sources."

She will not, then, rule out the idea of one day recording as Jenn Wasner. "I imagine there could come a time in my life where I felt I was ready to make something where I was me speaking of myself," she says cautiously. "But it's very intimidating, because I can always kill a band, I can always change a band name. But I'm stuck being myself forever. And it's a lot of weight to put on your own personal identity. Right now, I like the idea that I can switch creative selves as easily as calling it something different."

Still, there is a sense as Wasner talks that she's lit up by a new sense of uncontained possibility. It's there in the openness of the new Wye Oak record, in the liberation, perhaps, that came from recording and touring her Flock Of Dimes debut *If You See Me, Say Yes*, in the exasperation and ferocious desire to make up for lost opportunities that's there in her voice, as she discusses the challenges facing female artists.

"I've moved into this period of trying to feel less shame about things," she explains. For

Wasner and drummer and keyboardist Andy Stack worked remotely on their new record

ON ARTHUR RUSSELL…

"He did so many different things, and he was drawn to and attracted to so many different worlds, but he inhabited each one equally convincingly… it always felt like him. He did something I aspire to greatly – he pushed the limits of himself, he challenged his own tendencies, he was always trying to do the unexpected thing or subvert the clichés and norms. But he did so without having any effect on the deep emotional resonance of his songs. It never feels forced. It feels very human. A lot of the music he made is hyper-intellectual, but it doesn't feel cold or detached. And there's no way to fake that… I've spent so much time trying to examine these songs that are so wildly different from each other and trying to figure out what makes them feel like [they're] of a group, and I can't… The only explanation that I've been able to come to is it's magic, actual magic. It feels like there's a thread of his soul, something indefinable and intangible, but I can see it and I can feel it, even if I can't necessarily name it."

some time, Wasner felt "embarrassed that the form that I use is so vulnerable and personal and linked to feelings and emotions and that internal landscape that's often so disparaged," she says. She remembered a time when she was younger, when she had been able to write more freely "without that shame hovering over my head", and wondered how she might reconjure that sense of musical freedom. "Everything that I've done in the past few years has been an effort to get back to that space," she says. "That space where I'm not so caught up in my own brain and excessively over-intellectualising everything. And it's really encouraging, because I feel like my best work is still ahead of me if I can keep unpacking all that shit."

FULL CIRCLE

Growing older has helped. "I think a lot of people go through a similar thing, where there's this period when you're young and you have this stupid reckless self-confidence, and you learn a lot in that period. And then you go through your 20s-and-30s existential crisis of, 'Oh, actually everything I do is meaningless, and oh my god, I'm so embarrassed, look at all the stuff I've been doing!'. And then kind of coming back around as you get older and just becoming at peace with who you are."

Wasner did not expect that as a woman she would find ageing so enjoyable; when she was younger, she was aware that as the female lead singer of a band, there was a certain force attached to her youth and beauty that was likely to diminish with the years. "I remember thinking, 'I have to be the best at this, because some day I'll get old and I'll be invisible and undesirable, and that's the scariest thing in the world to me!'" she remembers. "But now, the idea of being invisible in that way, not forcibly sexualised by people, feels like the coolest thing ever. Like, 'Bring it the fuck on, it can't come soon enough!'. All these things that I was afraid of and was trying to outrun, now I'm like, 'Nah, this is the comfort zone where I can be myself without shame.'"

Wasner's rifling through the shelves of her record collection as she speaks, calling out examples of female artists she feels have led the way for her. "*Heaven Or Las Vegas* by the Cocteau Twins!" she says. "Beautiful record! Elizabeth Fraser is a goddamn genius. And I don't know really anything about her, which is probably by design, and I respect that quite a bit. And then *The Dreaming* by Kate Bush – she's another hero of mine. Oh, and here's Minnie Riperton… I have *Perfect Angel*, the one where she's eating a melting ice-cream cone on the cover." On her turntable right now, she points out, is *The Ecstatic Music Of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda*: "A reissue of her religious music – and it's gorgeous.

"This is fun!" she laughs. "I should look through my records more often! What else do I have here? Oh, the Big Thief record! I've had some of the best conversations about artistry and womanhood and the creative life and privacy and vulnerability with [Big Thief's] Adrianne [Lenker]," she says. "When they come through, they usually stay at my house and we end up having really long conversations – the kind that make you feel like the top of your head is on fire. And this has been an incredibly meaningful record for me this past year. I think she has the potential to be truly great, with a capital G."

ORDER AND CHAOS

Wasner pauses, takes stock of her record shelves. "Ahh," she groans. "I'm a mess! I am not organised!" She laughs. "My boyfriend has a huge record collection, which is awesome for me, and they're all alphabetised and he takes care of them. But for me, there's no system to it whatsoever. I like things to be very neat on the surface and I don't like having a lot of clutter, but it's a carefully designed illusion because under the surface, it's absolute chaos." ●

The Louder I Call, The Faster It Runs **is out now on Merge on black vinyl and in a sand-and-sky limited edition.**

Los Saicos took mid-60s Peru by storm, and have been hailed as 'proto punks'

PERUVIAN BLEND

Peru's homegrown rock soon evolved beyond its revolutionary mid-60s beginnings into a unique and fiery sound. **Russ Slater** charts its history...

Forget the panpipes – when it comes to music, Peru has an illustrious history packed with many musical detours and movements, but never did it hit its stride quite so well as when it embraced rock in the 60s and 70s. From setting a blueprint for punk to blazing a trail for psych and then into creating its own tropical-surf brew, Peru created some of the most ingenious, fiery and hallucinogenic rock being made anywhere in the world.

Jump back to the early 60s and rock 'n' roll was starting to take root in Peru's capital city, Lima, with bands such as Los Shain's, The New Juggler Sound and The (St. Thomas) Pepper Smelter imitating the sounds of surf, go-go and Merseybeat that

they were hearing on the radio. "Lima was very orderly and very happy," remembers Manuel Cornejo, who played in The New Juggler Sound and later Laghonia. "The art scene was full of colour and spontaneity. It was really intense, even more so with the explosion of music that came from England and the movement this generated in the youth of the decade."

Among the first bands to put Peruvian rock on the map were Los Saicos. Their second single, *Demolición*, released in 1965, was unlike anything else that had come before. Over an in-your-face surf guitar riff, singer Erwin Flores screams "demoler" ("demolish") over and over, until he hits the pay-off of "let's tear down the train station". Countless guttural "yeah-yeah-yeahs" follow until the train station is duly demolished, over and over again. In comparison to the garage rock being made in the US at this time, nothing came close to this level of nihilism. Further bouts of attitude followed with tracks such as *El Entierro De Los Gatos* (*Funeral Of The Cats*) and *Salvaje* (Savage), and they even tried a love song, with *Te Amo* – though the chorus of "I love you, but I have to leave" betrayed a clear lack of sentiment.

Though they didn't realise it, the group were showing the same kind of anger and disconnect from the world that would become a hallmark of punk in the 70s, so it's been no surprise to see them mentioned in connection with the movement. Legs McNeil, one of the founders of *Punk* magazine (the magazine that first used the term 'punk'), has even gone so far as to say: "Los Saicos invented punk… if Los Saicos aren't punk, then no one is punk." The group themselves certainly see the similarities. "We were proto-punk," says Flores. "Not *exactly* punk, but how Lucy was the predecessor to the human race, we were predecessors to punk."

REVOLUTION ROCK

Los Saicos split up in 1966 after recording just six singles, though they made a seismic impact in Lima, influencing groups such as Los Yorks, Los Shain's and Los Golden Boys, who adopted a similar rebel-rousing spirit to covers of songs such as *Woolly Bully* and *96 Tears* in Spanish, alongside some garage-rock originals. Slowly, this music began to infiltrate popular culture, being featured on TV, and new magazines started up to feature the bands. Then, in 1968, something monumental happened in Peru.

A military coup saw General Juan Velasco take power, and the government declared war on rock. "Velasco closed the doors of Peru to the world," says Cornejo. "He closed the newspapers to all the 'alienating' influences. It reached the height of expelling Santana for being in 'collusion' with the communists of the University of San Marcos."

Surprisingly, in this environment, the period from 1968 on marked a highpoint for Peruvian psych and progressive rock as various groups emerged that showed that the counter-culture was still well and truly ▶

PERU CREATED SOME OF THE MOST HALLUCINOGENIC ROCK ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

Traffic Sound created classic Peruvian psych-rock from 1969 onwards

PERUVIAN ROCK ON VINYL

Five classic, stylistically varied Peruvian rock albums to audition…

Various Artists
The Roots Of Chicha: Psychedelic Cumbias From Peru
2007
Released by Barbès Records

This is the more raucous of the two *Roots Of Chicha* compilations, with a mix of unruly Amazonian cumbia and straighter-though-no-less-hypnotic chicha from Lima. Infopesa's *Cumbias Chicadélicas* is also well worth checking out.

Traffic Sound
Virgin
1970
Originally on MaG, reissued by Essex Records

Though all of their albums are great, the mix of scuzzy guitar riffs and bucolic folk rock on *Virgin* are hard to resist. Plus, this one's got *Meshkalina*.

Peru Bravo
Funk, Soul & Psych From Peru's Radical Decade
2014
Released by Tiger's Milk Records

Tiger's Milk Records are a sister to a chain of Peruvian restaurants in London, and certainly make some tasty compilations. This one features classic rock bands such as Laghonia, Los Texao and Telegraph Avenue, alongside some fine Afro-Peruvian funk and other curios.

Los Destellos
Constelación
1971
Originally on Odeon Del Peru, reissued by Secret Stash Records

A total masterclass in chicha from Enrique Delgado and Los Destellos that veers from the surf-esque lilt of *A Patricia* to truly cosmic space rock with *Onsta La Yerbita*.

The Mad's
The Mad's
2013
Released by Repsychled

Though they never released any music at the time, this compilation of demos and a recent live-album release have insured that The Mad's have been recognised as one of Peruvian rock's true gems, with riffs as hard as Cream's and a penchant for scintillating improvisations.

Los Destellos, led by guitarist Enrique Delgado, were the first chica band in 1968

alive. The Mad's were one of the first to show their love for the heavier rock they were hearing from overseas.

They started out as mainly a covers band but, after meeting Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, who were on holiday and took a liking to the band, they headed for England under the mentorship of the group. They would go on to record in The Rolling Stones' studio, see Hendrix at the Isle Of Wight, jam with Steve Winwood, Mama Cass and Jeff Beck, and generally take in all that mid-to-late 60s London had to offer. After a number of changes in the band, they lost some of their magic and they broke up, though the demos cut in the Stones' studio show a great rhythmic hard-rock band with tracks such as *Fly Away* and *Tumor Bossa* showcasing great interplay between the rest of the band and talented guitarist Alex Ventura.

Though The Mad's would not find fame until their demos were released years later, there were many bands who made a name for themselves at the time, and no psych-rock act was as successful as Traffic Sound. "There was six of us in the group," says the band's bassist, Willy Thorne. "We all studied

Traffic Sound, circa 1968

THIS TROPICAL PSYCH-ROCK WAS PLAYED IN LIMA, THE AMAZON AND ALL OVER PERU

at Catholic college." With their shared interest in music, the group started playing covers of The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Santana, The Who and The Animals, as well as writing some of their own songs, informed by the improvised jams they would play live. "We played at family parties, colleges, and in beach and surf clubs… as well as at discotheques, where the people danced to our music a lot," remembers Thorne.

They released their debut album, *Virgin,* in 1969. It's a record that renowned psych journalist Richard Morton Jack featured in his book *Psychedelia: 101 Iconic Underground Rock Albums 1966-1970*. It's the only Spanish-language Latin-American album to feature. "*Virgin* is a special record," Jack tells us, "with excellent songs and textures, and an appealingly wistful vibe, especially on *Tell The World I'm Alive*, my pick track. [There's] also some fine distorted guitar in the heavier songs." They followed it up with three further albums over the next two years, all of which are well worth exploring, especially for their addition of sax to a psych-rock sound.

This is best exemplified on their signature track *Meshkalina*, a riotous, wailing tour de force that is as funky as it is raw. It also has playful lyrics that reveal the counter-culture in Peru and nod towards the country's indigenous past: "Yawar Huaca [an Incan ruler] wonder[ed] why he was high once... Spread the weed one day, all over his empire… He said, 'Man, it's here, let's try my new substance', give me some meshkalina [a hallucinogen derived from cacti]."

As the 70s wore on, the Peruvian rock scene blossomed. Telegraph Avenue offered their own US West Coast-influenced take on things; Tarkus went in the heavier direction of Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin; whereas We All Together could never get over the pull of McCartney, putting out some great power-pop albums. Then there were bands that offered something completely different, such as El Polen, who went for an Andean-inspired folk-rock that has recently found a big fan in Devendra Banhart, and Los Texao who, with their guttural garage-beat sound, showed there was life outside of Lima – they hailed from Arequipa.

DIFFERENT CLASS

Yet almost as soon as it had arrived, the Peruvian rock scene started to die out, and by the mid 70s, many of the bands had stopped making music. Explaining the end of Traffic Sound, Willy Thorne tells us: "The band stopped because the goals of all of us but [one] was to make music as a hobby, but it was taking over our lives, so we all went to university and then continued down different paths, since the music industry in Peru was too embryonic for us to dedicate ourselves to it." This seems to have been a recurring theme for a number of musicians.

Describing the end of rock in Peru, Carlos Torres Rotondo, who has written a great book about Peruvian rock, called *Demoler*, says: "Many saw music as a hobby, and when they finished university they got a job. Others decided to continue in music, but emigrated and worked as mercenaries in hotels… others got into Latin jazz, some got burned by drugs. But the determining factor was not knowing the do-it-yourself approach, behaving, sometimes, like rock stars with an ego that made them read reality in a distorted way. That caused the break-up of several musical collectives."

While the rock music already mentioned – which was largely played by and for the middle and upper classes – was dying out, a new style of music was developing in working-class neighbourhoods all over Peru. As with Los Saicos, it was born out of surf, but it went in a completely new direction. Chicha, to use the term that has come to define it, took the rock 'n' roll format of electric guitar, bass, drums and (occasionally) organ, but added Afro-Latin percussion and switched from 4/4 to rhythms such as cumbia from Colombia, Cuban guaracha and huayno from The Andes. This was tropical psychedelic rock, played by ensembles in Lima and groups in the Amazon and all over Peru, which had the aim of getting people dancing. It was much loved by the people, though despised by the elite due to long-standing friction between social classes. The first chicha band is recognised as Los

Traffic Sound, playing live in Santiago, Chile, incorporated saxophone into psych

A sequence of shots from the archives of the Infopesa studio, pressing plant and label

Destellos, who began in 1968 and were led by the enigmatic guitarist Enrique Delgado. Mainly instrumental, they released countless albums through the 60s and 70s, all led by Delgado's clean, probing guitar lines which, when blessed with the polyrhythms of the bass and percussion, conjured a hypnotic quality that was impossible to ignore. In the wake of Los Destellos, countless other bands got involved. These included Los Diablos Rojos, Manzanita Y Su Conjunto and Los Walkers, as well as Amazonian bands including Los Mirlos, Los Wembers and Juaneco Y Su Combo, who would sing about the jungle and ayahuasca ceremonies – as well as the ubiquitous tracks about love, the main theme of many chicha tracks.

CHICA FUNKY

Juan Ricardo Maraví helps to run Infopesa, a record label set up by his father in the 70s that released classic chicha records by Los Mirlos and Juaneco Y Su Combo. He sees the popularity of chicha in the 70s, which was matched by genres such as salsa, bolero and Peruvian folk music, as symbolic of a trend. "In the 70s, a lot of the music listened to in our country came from foreign bands," says Maraví. "I think that what Infopesa did, was to look inside instead of outside. [Our] music was made for the masses and they felt an instant connection with their roots."

Though always popular in Peru's pueblos jóvenes (shanty towns), chicha would not get any critical respect, until a French musician called Olivier Conan discovered the style and released a compilation called *The Roots Of Chicha* in 2007. It introduced many people to the genre, and helped lead to a new-found admiration for the music in Peru.

Since then, chicha bands have started up in the UK, US and even Australia, and bands including Howe Gelb's Giant Sand and Franz Ferdinand have covered the style live. The latter band's frontman, Alex Kapranos, even provided liner notes for a compilation released by Infopesa called *Cumbias Chichadélicas*. About his experience of discovering the genre, Kapranos says: "It was exciting – the music had a rough energy and a garage edginess to the sound, but had a distinct Peruvian flavour. Needle-point guitars, scrapers shaking the beat and, here and there, some psychedelic keys and echoes." Thanks to the *Roots Of Chicha* compilations and reissues from Infopesa, this music keeps on finding larger audiences.

Likewise, the bands connected with the garage and psych scene have all had their music reissued, with Los Saicos finally having their singles collected together on one record and The Mad's seeing their demos released for the first time by the Peruvian label Repsychled, as well as albums by the likes of Traffic Sound getting the reissue treatment. The arrival of the British label Tiger's Milk Records has also helped to disseminate some of this music on vinyl for a new audience, via compilations of Peruvian music from the 60s and 70s. With every year it becomes clearer: nobody did rock quite like the Peruvians. ●

2007'S THE ROOTS OF CHICHA INTRODUCED MANY PEOPLE TO THE GENRE, AND LED TO FRESH ADMIRATION IN PERU

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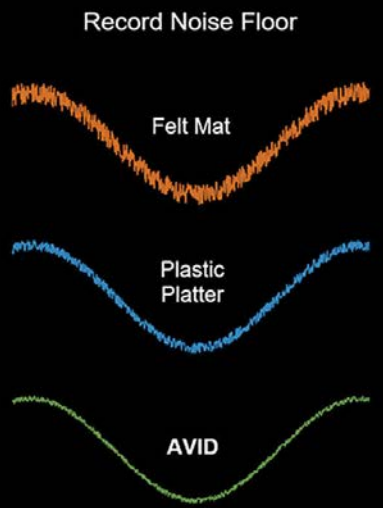

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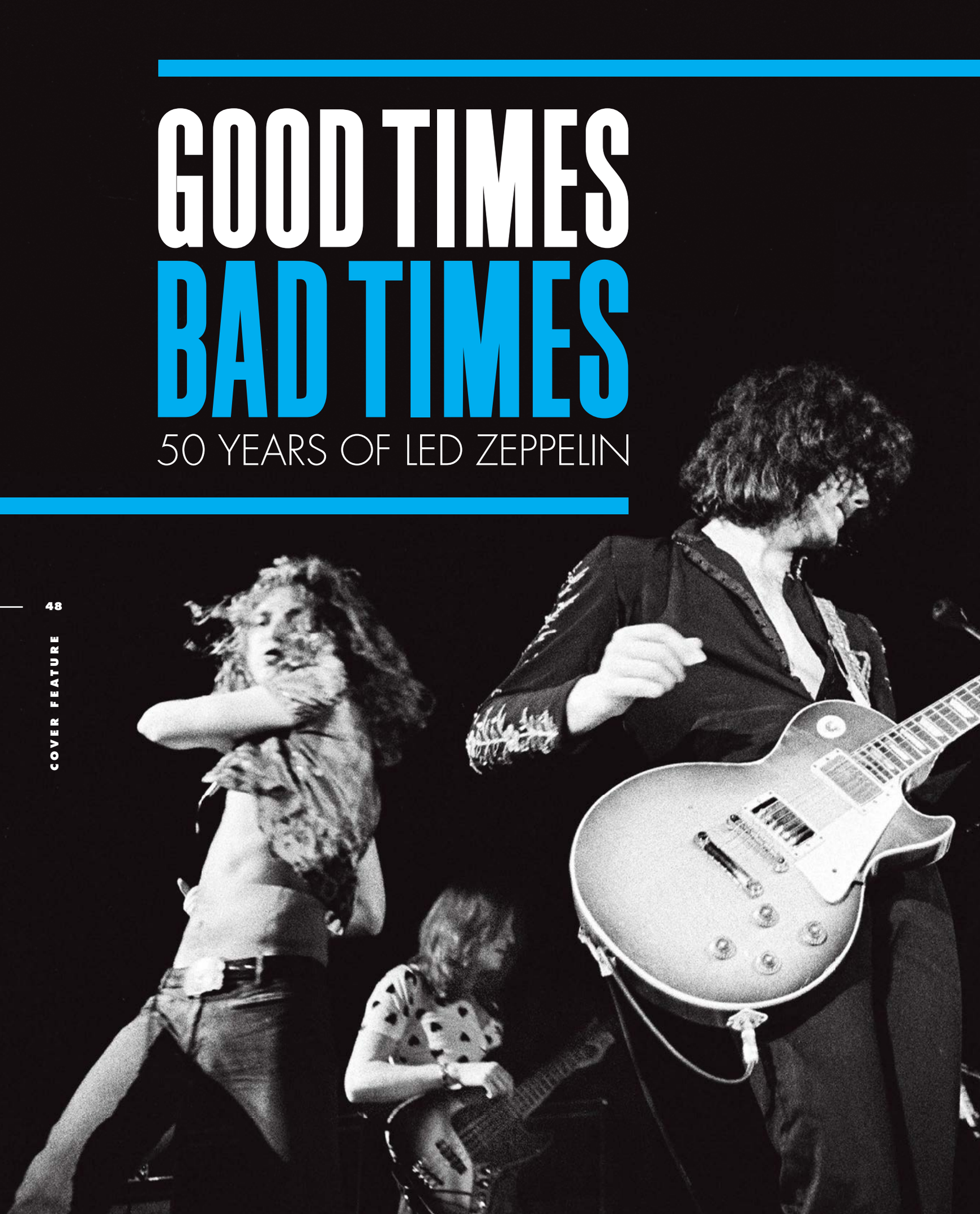
50 YEARS OF LED ZEPPELIN



As Led Zeppelin's 50th anniversary celebrations kick off with the first vinyl release of *How The West Was Won*, **Matt Peters** looks at some pivotal highs and lows from half a century of one of the most influential bands of all time…

Whether they admit it or not, legacy is the Grail most artists are chasing. But it's one of the great human quandaries; what do we leave behind of ourselves? In the case of Led Zeppelin, it's one of the greatest catalogues in recording history – a decade of creativity that's arguably second only to the Fab Four's. Beyond the hammer of the gods, red snappers and rumours of the occult, Page, Plant, Bonham and Jones crafted a musical treasure chest so rich it continues to be picked through, analysed and reissued while the fevered fascination continues.

Moreover, it endures as a benchmark of achievement for musicians. "The whole thing just went into a place that no one had been to before," Robert Plant summarised in 2014. Because Zeppelin's impact stretches beyond the albums; they changed the way a hugely successful touring band could exist and be perceived, and in a time when single releases and radio play could dictate fortunes, they resolutely refused to play the game. Of all the acts that can be called heavy rock, Zeppelin were the greatest. But they frequently transcended genre. At its core, this was a band who were more than the sum of their parts – and that was by design.

Unlike most of the origin stories behind other legendary British bands, including The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Pink Floyd and Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin were formed by a linchpin who had already carved out quite a career for himself beforehand. Mostly self-taught on the guitar from the age of 12, James Patrick Page left school in Epsom, Surrey at 15, before heading to London's clubs to pursue his musical dream. Page's first professional gigs were with singer Red E Lewis And The Red Caps and Neil Christian & The Crusaders in the late 50s, but after sampling the relentlessness of a touring life on the road, he became focused on session work as a guitarist. And he soon found he had a gift for it. In the three-year period between 1963 and 1966, Page's studio work with other artists was prolific and sought-after; he worked with stars ranging from Cliff Richard and Lulu to Donovan and Nico.

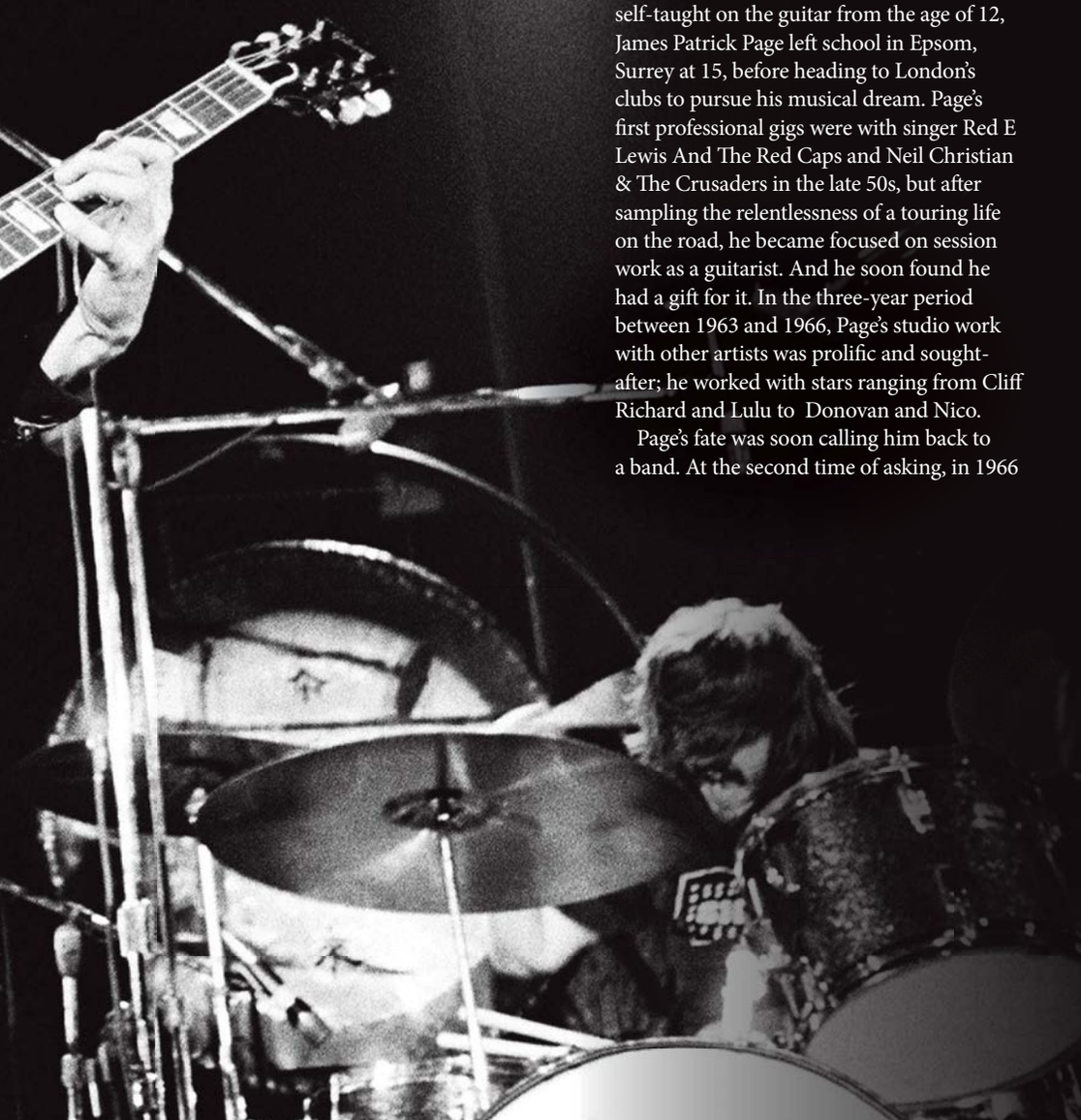
Page's fate was soon calling him back to a band. At the second time of asking, in 1966 he joined Jeff Beck in The Yardbirds. And when the band split in July 1968, Page was encouraged by their formidable manager Peter Grant to form his own band. He wasted no time; the new ensemble initially toured Scandinavia in September under the name The New Yardbirds, but by the end of the year, Page's band had a debut album recorded with his session work savings in just nine days at London's Olympic Studios. Following a name change to Led Zeppelin (a reference to the idea of going down like a lead balloon), their self-titled debut would be released on Atlantic in January 1969 in the US, with a March release following in the UK.

GATHERING OF THE GODS

The guitarist's aim was clear; as he told fan Chris Cornell in a 2015 interview, he wanted this band to be the guitar showcase he'd always dreamed of, encompassing the versatility he had learned in the years before. But there was a crucial caveat. "It was going to be a guitar *tour de force*, but not at the expense of the other members," he told Cornell. "Everyone needed to be heard."

The other parts of that puzzle were Page's equals in their fields – they just didn't know it yet. Page had crossed paths with bassist and keyboard player John Paul Jones as another prolific musician on the session circuit; Page and manager Grant headed north to Birmingham to audition relative unknown Robert Plant after a recommendation from their first choice, Terry Reid. Plant's Black Country friend, drummer John 'Bonzo' Bonham, took longer to convince about the new venture. He'd already played with the singer in Band Of Joy, but after Grant and Page's dogged pursuit, eventually relented and joined with him again.

As they rehearsed the material Page had prepared, the alchemical power the driven and focused four created was undeniable. "Everyone started playing in the stratosphere," noted the guitarist about his band, "me included, because I never played guitar like I did on that first album." They brought out the best in each other, but it was only the beginning. The scope and ambition would grow to become the ultimate vehicle for their talents, which stretched far beyond blues rock. Here, from across their 50-year history, are the key ups, downs and remarkable achievements of Led Zeppelin.



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18+

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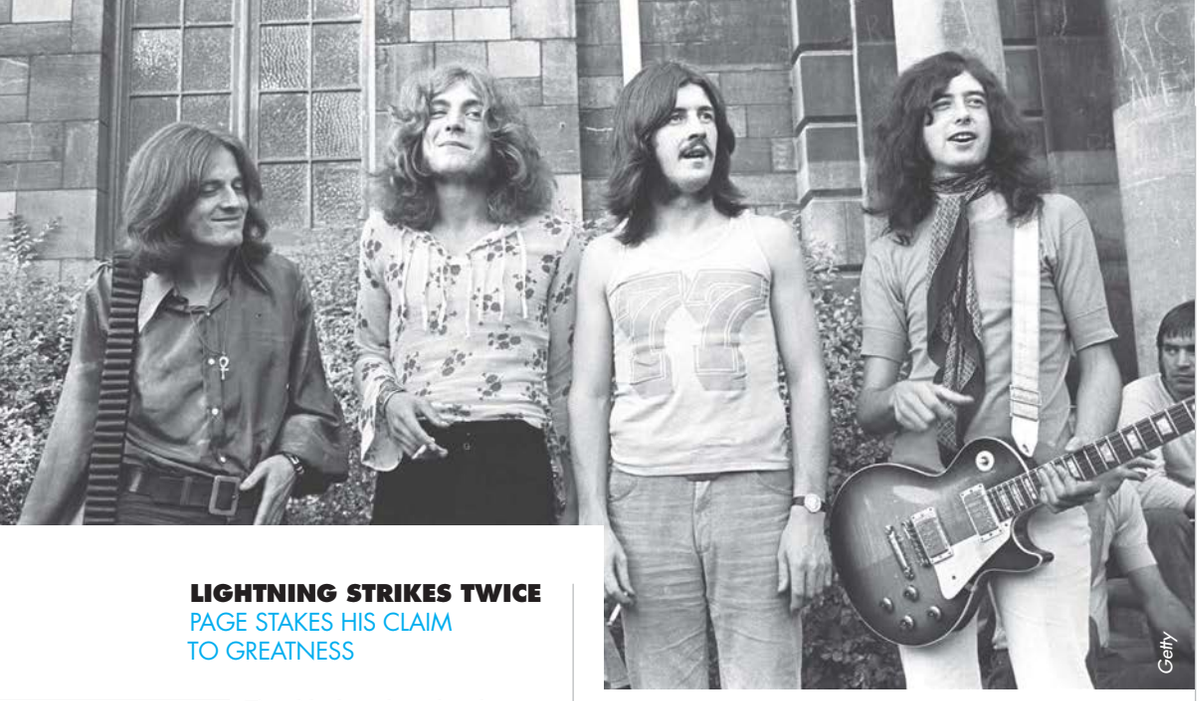

Getty

LIGHTNING STRIKES TWICE
PAGE STAKES HIS CLAIM TO GREATNESS

22 OCTOBER 1969

The old adage that a band have a lifetime to write their first record, leading to the inevitable 'difficult second album', really doesn't apply here. The UK press were still taking a while to catch on by the time the unremitting Zeppelin were already on their second US tour in the summer of 1969. As a result, *Led Zeppelin II* was tracked on the road on both sides of the Atlantic with engineer Eddie Kramer. If the process seemed disjointed and pressurised from being cooked up in London, L.A. and New York recording studios, the record didn't show it. Instead, Zeppelin made their ambitions clear under the vision of Page – a guitarist who could showboat while soundscaping. "You watch how Page's parts come together," notes Pearl Jam's Stone Gossard, "his aesthetic of weird scales and being irreverent with keys and being very rhythmically intense. Always a very strong sense of rhythm. From a songwriting perspective, he's *the* guy."

The encompassing psychedelic trip of *Dazed And Confused*, the brazen intensity in *Heartbreaker*'s solo, *Thank You* and *Ramble On*'s acoustic excursions – not to mention the combination of riff genius with studio experimentation exemplified on the menacing *Whole Lotta Love* – proved Page's prodigious abilities as composer, player and producer. The fans had already shown their faith in it, too – *Led Zeppelin II* received pre-orders of 40,000 by the time it was released stateside on 22 October, over a week before the UK release.

BLACK DOG WAS NAMED AFTER A LABRADOR THAT WANDERED AROUND THE GROUNDS OF THE REPORTEDLY HAUNTED HOUSE

LONE GRANGERS
ZEPPELIN TO THE MANOR BORN FOR THEIR FOURTH OPUS

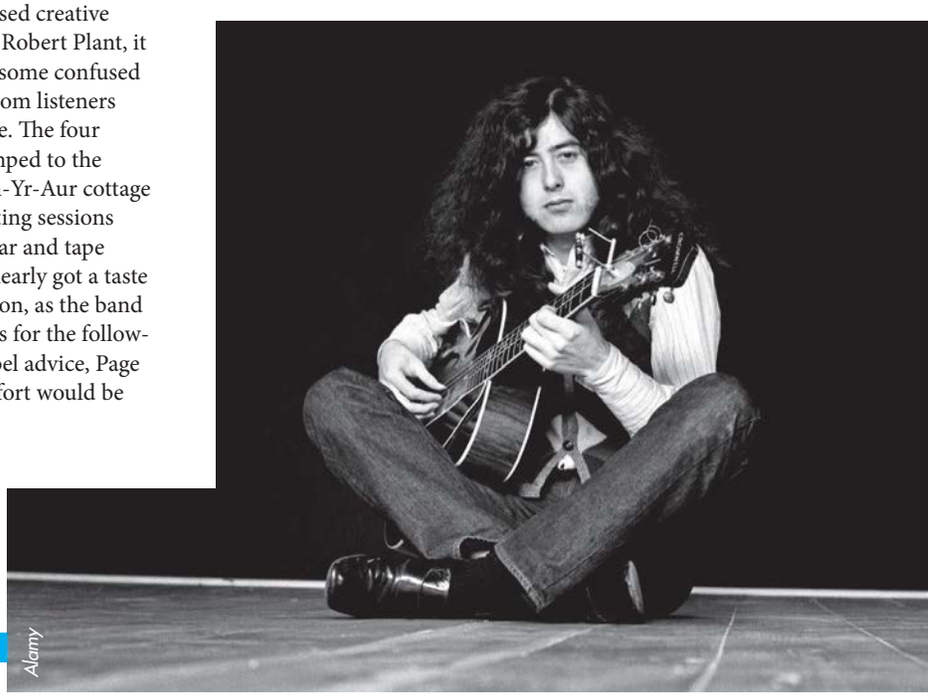
DECEMBER 1970

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, because while 1970's *Led Zeppelin III* boldly pushed the folkier acoustic elements of their sound further in fascinating ways, with increased creative input from Robert Plant, it resulted in some confused reactions from listeners and critics at the time. The four musicians had decamped to the remote country Bron-Yr-Aur cottage in Wales for *III*'s writing sessions with an acoustic guitar and tape recorder. They had clearly got a taste for creating in isolation, as the band defiantly closed ranks for the follow-up. Going against label advice, Page decided their next effort would be untitled, without sleeve notes or the Zeppelin name on the cover; instead there were four mysterious symbols, each representing a band member – giving *Led Zeppelin IV* the nickname 'Four Symbols'.

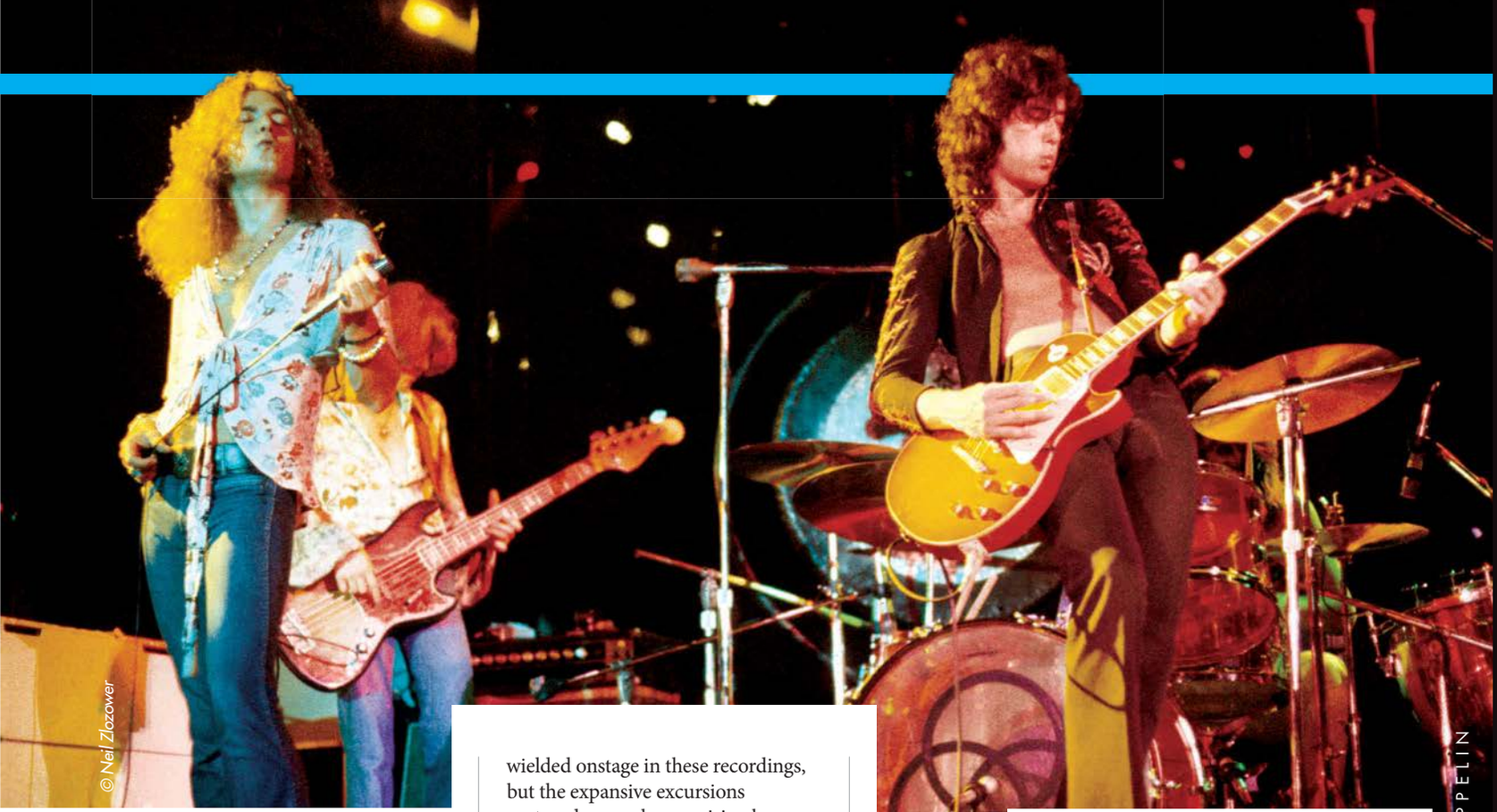
Page's resolution with the project proved well founded. On the advice of their trusted engineer, the keen-eared Andy Johns (younger brother of producer Glyn), the latter part of tracking found the band on location with The Rolling Stones' Mobile Studio. The tumble-down surroundings of grand Victorian house Headley Grange in East Hampshire proved crucial for what is a strong contender for Zeppelin's finest hour. Bonham's spectacular drum sound on the band's version of Kansas Joe McCoy and Memphis Minnie's *When The Levee Breaks* was tracked by Johns, capturing the natural reverb in the stairwell, using mics on the stairs above Bonzo's new 26" Ludwig bass drum. Plant came up with the initial lyrics to *Stairway To Heaven* by the log fire one evening while Page strummed an acoustic, and *Black Dog*, with its revolving Jones riff, was named after a Labrador that wandered around the grounds of the reportedly haunted house.

Stairway…'s grand scope, as it built from bustle-in-your-hedgerow folk ballad to full-blown dramatic Page solo, meant the guitarist needed to use a custom-made Gibson EDS-1275 doubleneck guitar with 12- and six-string necks to deliver it faithfully live without switching instruments. It's still regarded as one of the most iconic guitar performances of all time.

Above: Zeppelin pose before an early gig at Bath's Festival Of Blues in June 1969


Alamy

Right: Page in 1970, when the band pursued a more acoustic-oriented sound on *Led Zeppelin III*



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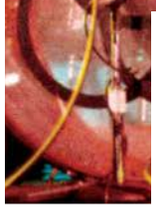
27 MAY 1972

GO WEST
THE QUARTET CAPTURED IN THEIR ELEMENT ON TOUR

By the time Zeppelin hit North America for their eighth tour there, they were in rude creative health, with four albums under their belt and the stamina for three-hour sets becoming a standard. It also saw powerful new material previewed from forthcoming fifth album *Houses Of The Holy*.

The proof is in the pudding on the newly remastered four-LP *How The West Was Won* reissue, with recordings taken from two shows during the two-month excursion; L.A. Forum on 25 June, 1972 and Long Beach Arena on 27 June, 1972 (see p102 for our review).

There's plenty of evidence of how efficiently their power could be wielded onstage in these recordings, but the expansive excursions captured are eyebrow-raising by the tamer standards of today's rock. The 25-minute *Dazed And Confused*'s journey moves from Page's groundbreaking use of a violin bow to a diversion into *The Crunge*'s funky town, while the equally expansive *Whole Lotta Love* takes in James. B Oden via John Lee Hooker. Okay, Bonham's 19-minute *Moby Dick* drum solo might push it for some, but if any drummer deserves one…



Above: Live, Zeppelin eclipsed even The Beatles for the biggest US crowd, in Tampa, Florida, 1973

Below: The band arrive in the US for their 1972 tour

10 MAY 1974

TRAVELLERS OF TIME AND SPACE
SWAN SONG TAKES FLIGHT WITH A DOUBLE

Zeppelin's first double album came with much fanfare – the first release on their own record-label imprint in 1975, distributed by their former label Atlantic and founded the year before. Swan Song Records would go on to release material from artists including Bad Company and The Pretty Things, but first there was the grand arrival of *Physical Graffiti*. It wasn't just different from previous Zeppelin releases in its 15-track length and sumptuous die-cut sleeve depicting a New York City tenement block in the East Village – with interchangeable images behind the windows thanks to the inner sleeves. Several of its songs were taken from sessions for previous albums, with three each from *IV* and *Houses Of The Holy* (including its title track, oddly enough).

Aided, as ever, by the musical multitasking unsung hero of the

Alamy

THE 25-MINUTE *DAZED AND CONFUSED*'S JOURNEY MOVES FROM PAGE'S USE OF A VIOLIN BOW TO A DIVERSION INTO *THE CRUNGE*'S FUNKY TOWN

THE SONGS REMAIN THE SAME

Myles Kennedy, one of the few outsiders to have jammed with Led Zep, discusses their legacy…

"When you leave behind a legacy that was so groundbreaking, with content that was so strong and players that were so amazing, it will stand the test of time. I think they're going to be talked about for centuries – just how important they are in the evolution of the artform. Ultimately, it's the quality of the catalogue.

"Normally, when a teenager starts discovering music, they want to discover the music that's relevant to their era. And what I find interesting is that so many young people, even when I was teaching guitar, would discover Zeppelin and bring the songs in to learn. Regardless of what was in vogue, they'd discover this band and say, 'What is this?!'. And it's so compelling. You're seeing it now with a band called Greta Van Fleet, who are very young, and great at what they do, but you can hear the influence there. To me, it's a testament of how incredible Zeppelin were. We'd have a very different musical landscape if it wasn't for them. I got my musical openmindedness through Led Zeppelin. You can listen to a Led Zeppelin record and have so many different flavours and so many different genres of music being touched on. And that's another thing that makes them important. They weren't a one-trick pony – they could do it all."

Myles Kennedy's solo album 'Year Of The Tiger' is out now on Napalm Records

band, John Paul Jones (mandolin, lap steel and organ to name a few of his instruments besides bass), the sheer scope of musical styles here – from hard rockers to country, funk and instrumental folk – makes it the finest representation of the diverse terrain Zeppelin could cover. And *Kashmir* was its towering summit.

Page and Plant's openness to world styles found them secretly recording in Bombay with Indian classical musicians back in 1972 (hear the 2015 deluxe reissue of *Coda* for more), and three years in the making this ambitious orchestral-rock piece was inspired by both Page and Plant's experiences. For the guitarist, it was experiments with modal melodies in DADGAD tuning and, despite its title, Plant reflected on his 1973 travels in Sub-Saharan Africa. Though in truth, nobody in the band had ever been to Kashmir, the majestic composition remains one of the greatest examples of a rock crossover with both world music and stirring orchestration.

NOBODY IN THE BAND HAD EVER BEEN TO KASHMIR, YET THE MAJESTIC COMPOSITION IS ONE OF ROCK'S GREATEST EXAMPLES OF A CROSSOVER

Alamy

The loss of their powerhouse drummer in 1980 was too much for Zeppelin to bear

15 AUGUST 1979

SLIDING DOORS

ZEPPELIN'S LAST ALBUM: THEIR STRANGEST BREW

While predecessor *Presence* has some remarkable moments (the thundering *Achilles Last Stand*, please take a bow) and a surprising lack of keyboards and acoustic guitars, it marked the end of the band's remarkable creative run. *In Through The Out Door*, Zeppelin's final studio album proper, is also their most flawed work. Originally issued somewhat ominously in an outer sleeve styled as a brown paper bag, the soulless mix that even its reissue failed to address isn't a great experience for the ears.

But the nods to joyful Billy Joel-esque pop on *Fool In The Rain* aren't that shocking in light of the bravely experimental *Houses Of The Holy*'s Marmite attempts at reggae (*D'yer Maker*) and the James Brown-inspired *The Crunge*. Still, even by their standards, the quartet were in a strange place here. For good reasons.

Page's guitar influence is notably diminished throughout the record, which was an inevitability due to his struggles with drug addiction at the time, while Bonham was swamped in his own battles with alcoholism as the band tracked in Stockholm eight months before the album's release. John Paul Jones's synths moved to fill the void, but the relationship between experimentation and Zeppelin's high standards was blurring confusingly; *Hot Dog*'s honky-tonk knees-up attempts to recall the old Page/Plant fire but merely fizzles, and the head-scratching 10-and-a-half-minute *Carouselambra* remains one of their oddest manoeuvres.

Plant's touching tribute to his late son Karac on *All My Love* is in stark contrast, a rare song without a Page credit and a heartfelt ballad for the five-year-old child who tragically passed away in the UK from a stomach virus while the singer was touring the US in 1977. The turmoil almost split the band, before Zeppelin faced another tragedy in their already eventful history.

25 SEPTEMBER 1980

DAZED AND CONFUSED

ZEPPELIN LOSE THEIR BEATING HEART

"John Bonham is the greatest rock drummer of all time," Dave Grohl stated in 2015. And you'd be pushed to find any drummer in rock who could consider themselves

Bonzo's superior. His influence on modern rock drumming cannot be overstated; immensely hard-hitting, but with feel and a surprisingly smooth groove, plus a right foot like a traction engine, his chops were matched by a legendarily larger-than-life personality.

But Bonham's rock wildman image and the untimely nature of his death can often distract from his other side; the emotional support he gave to his old friend Plant when he lost his son in 1977, and how he encouraged his own son Jason to take up the drums.

His death at the age of 32 on 25 September 1980, from inhalation of vomit after a heavy drinking bout, effectively ended the band. Bonham had been staying at Page's house in Windsor as the band rehearsed before a European tour. In a statement released on 4 December, the remaining three members stated: "We wish it to be known that the loss of our dear friend and the deep respect we have for his family, together with the sense of undivided harmony felt by ourselves and our manager, have led us to decide that we could not continue as we were." Page's dream was over.

1985

NO QUARTER
THE BAND PAY THEIR BLUES DUES... IN COURT

By their second album, Zeppelin's debt to pioneering US blues artists who had inspired them, such as Skip James, was clear. In that way, they were no different from the Stones before them. But for Page and co, it became a legal matter. Courts found two specific songs on *II* owed a significant debt to Chicago blues legend Willie Dixon. For *Bring It On Home*, Page had intended the intro and outro to be a homage to the Dixon-penned 1966 original. But Dixon disagreed, and sued in 1972. The songwriter took them to court again in 1985 for writing credits, claiming *Whole Lotta Love* used lyrics from Dixon's 1962 song for Muddy Waters, *You Need Love*. Both suits were settled out of court for undisclosed sums, with Dixon gaining credit for *Bring It On Home* and subsequently included in the credits for *Whole Lotta Love*.

Jason Bonham with the band's surviving original members at the NYC premiere of *Celebration Day* in 2012

1985, 1988, 1995 AND 2007

CELEBRATION DAYS
THE REUNIONS

Though Page and Plant would work together again in the 1990s on live and recorded projects reworking Zeppelin songs, they've also reunited with Jones sporadically under the Led Zeppelin name. The first time was the ill-fated *Live Aid* performance at the JFK Stadium in Philadelphia, with Phil Collins on drums, that's not remembered fondly by the members. The next three performance reunions would feature Jason Bonham on drums, with 2007's *Ahmet Ertegun Tribute Concert* at the O2 Arena in London on 10 December the only full set, captured on 2012 release *Celebration Day*.

Demand was at fever pitch for follow-up activity, but the ever forward-looking Plant, busy with his own solo projects, refused resolutely. This led Page and Jones to explore alternative options with Steven Tyler and Myles Kennedy on the mic. By 2009, any potential project plan was dissolved. Now that it looks as though the last Zeppelin reissues may have been issued, we eagerly await and hope for Jimmy Page's next creative chapter. ●

Turn to p103 for our full review of *How The West Was Won*

AFTER THE 2007 REUNION, DEMAND FOR MORE ACTIVITY WAS HUGE – BUT PLANT, BUSY WITH HIS OWN SOLO PROJECTS, REFUSED RESOLUTELY

THE ESSENTIAL

LED ZEPPELIN

A four-piece that far exceeded the sum of its parts, Led Zep created the blueprint for the modern rock band, and sold a whole lotta albums in the process. **Gary Tipp** rambles on

It could easily be argued that Led Zeppelin's influence on popular music in the 70s is the equal of The Beatles' in the 60s. By adding cochlear-crushing volume to the primal, sexual drive of their live performance, founder Jimmy Page and his golden-god cohorts ushered in and subsequently defined the heavy metal and rock music genres. By stubbornly refusing to release multiple 45s from their LPs, they turned a generation on to album-oriented rock and, as a consequence, changed the way radio stations broadcast (particularly in the US). Plus their swaggering, lawless lifestyle near enough defined the archetype for how a band should look and behave.

A quick look at Led Zeppelin's full discography reveals nine studio albums (if you are in the mood to count *Coda*, ostensibly an odds-and-sods round-up of unreleased tracks put out a couple of years after the group disbanded), four live albums – and nine compilation albums. There are also singles carrying their name, but as previously mentioned, the band steadfastly released only one pre-release 45 per album in the States and not a single one in the UK.

This, along with their reticence to be interviewed in the music press, only added to the sense of mystique surrounding the band, and certainly helped to sell a truckload of albums.

Without wishing to disappear too far down the spreadsheet rabbit hole, the amount of vinyl Led Zep have shifted over the years is remarkable. Various sources estimate the group's record sales at way over the 200 million mark, and they're the second-best-selling band of all time in the US behind The Beatles. In the UK, they achieved the no mean feat of eight consecutive No. 1 albums.

HOW MANY MORE SALES?

With 37 million copies sold and counting, *Led Zeppelin IV* is one of the best-selling albums in rock music history (more than 23 million of them were shifted in the US alone). All this from an album that was released without an official title, with the band's name absent from the cover… this was a group who did things their way.

Our Essential releases are listed in reverse chronological order. We've priced the 'rarest' vinyl in terms of UK first presses, but, of course, the 45s here are US releases – so while it's unlikely you'll find them sitting in crates in your local charity shop, you can still track them down if you dig deep enough online.

20 HOW THE WEST WAS WON (2018)

Culled from legendary gigs at The Forum and the Long Beach Arena during the band's 1972 US tour, this majestic triple (originally out in 2003, but not on vinyl) pays a fitting tribute to Zeppelin's reputation as a live act without peer. Here's a four-piece captured at the very height of their coruscating creative powers. As Page himself notes: "That 1972 gig is pretty much a testament of how good it was."

Rarest 2018 Swan Song Super Deluxe Boxset **£128**

19 MOTHERSHIP (2007)

Released to coincide with the 2007 reunion gigs, the tracklisting of this comprehensive trawl through the back catalogue was selected by the erstwhile rock gods, Page, Plant and Jones, themselves. The songs represent the eight studio albums (*Coda* is not included) and it runs through in strict chronological order. Not a bad place to start for newbies.

Rarest 2015 Swan Song **£60**

18 CELEBRATION DAY (2012)

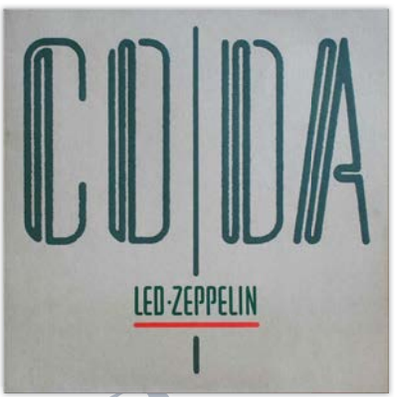
On 10 December, 2007, the ageing supergroup took the stage at London's O2 Arena to headline a tribute concert for Atlantic Records founder Ahmet Ertegun. With Jason Bonham, son of John, on the drums, the old boys rolled back the years and scorched through a set of landmark classics. The album exists in part for the 20 million applicants who missed out on tickets.

Rarest 2012 Swan Song **£60**
Latest 2013 Swan Song, boxset **£110**

17 BBC SESSIONS (1997)

Led Zeppelin's early days (1969-71) are captured on vinyl across five mesmerising BBC sessions and a blistering full live performance. The recordings encompass the first four albums and document the band's rapidly evolving chemistry. The album was re-released in 2016 as *The Complete BBC Sessions* across five LPs, with even more rare material for Zeppelin completists to drool over.

Rarest 2016 Atlantic **£65-£75**



16 CODA (1982)

Regarded as the ninth and certainly the final studio album, *Coda* was released two years after the band had officially disbanded following John Bonham's death. It is a collection of previously unused tracks spanning the band's 12-year career and neatly ties up the loose ends. As is to be expected, this posthumous release is hardly the most coherent fare, but still serves as a fascinating postscript.

Rarest 1982 Swan Song, with embossed lettering **£40**
Latest 2015 Swan Song **£15-£20**

15 IN THROUGH THE OUT DOOR (1979)

With Bonham and Page downed by their respective addictions (booze, heroin) the band's eighth studio album was left in the steadier hands of Plant and Jones. Recorded at ABBA's Polar Studios in Stockholm, the two of them soldiered on to deliver a synth-heavy approximation of a Led Zeppelin album.

Rarest 1979 Swan Song **£20-£35**
Latest 2008 Swan Song **£20**

14 THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME (1976)

The live soundtrack album of the concert film of the same name was recorded over three nights of concerts at New York's Madison Square Garden, during the band's 1973 North American tour. There is more than just a whiff of rock-star entitlement about the whole thing, but as a historical document, it still manages to pass the test of time.

Rarest 1976 Swan Song **£35**
Latest 2008 Swan Song **£20-£25**

13 PRESENCE (1976)

After a run of spectacular success, the cracks began to open. In a rapidly shifting musical landscape, Zeppelin were now regarded as dinosaurs by a new generation of bands. To compound matters, Plant had suffered a serious car accident and was confined to a wheelchair throughout the sessions. Despite these setbacks, *Presence* has its moments, with *Achilles Last Stand* and *Candy Store Rock* the highlights.

Rarest 1976 Swan Song **£50**
Latest 2015 Swan Song **£20**

12 PHYSICAL GRAFFITI (1975)

As befitting Led Zep's mid-70s juggernaut status, this sprawling double album is monumental in both its ambition and scope. The sonic sculptures carved out for this magnum opus include the mighty *Kashmir* and the epic *In My Time Of Dying*. Immediately prior to its recording, John Paul Jones was toying with the idea of becoming choirmaster at Winchester Cathedral.

Rarest 1975 Swan Song **£60**
Latest 2015 Swan Song **£35**

11 TRAMPLED UNDER FOOT (1975)

The relentless semi-funk riff that dominates this US single, the first on newly formed label Swan Song, was inspired by Stevie Wonder's floor-filler *Superstition*. Plant's smutty lyrics pay tribute to Robert Johnson's blues classic *Terraplane Blues*. Further proof that if you're going to lean on your influences, it's best to have good ones.

Rarest US release **£8-£10**

PRESSING MATTERS

Collector's items in the Led Zeppelin catalogue

As we've touched on, Led Zeppelin were well and truly an 'albums band' in the UK and the clamour for vinyl with their name on it has meant there's been a levee-breaking number of pressings. Obviously, collectors are keen to get their mitts on the early ones – so here's a quick guide to first pressings:

Led Zeppelin
A first pressing with red/maroon Atlantic label, turquoise sleeve lettering and 'Superhype' publishing will set you back **£1,500**

Led Zeppelin II
A first pressing with red/maroon Atlantic label, with 'Living Loving Wreck' miscredit, light-brown gatefold sleeve with blue-green edge comes in at **£450**

Led Zeppelin III
A first pressing with gatefold rotating-wheel sleeve, 'Do What Thou Wilt' in runoff, 'Produced by Jimmy Page' and 'Executive Producer Peter Grant' on the label is **£200**

Led Zeppelin IV
A first pressing, gatefold sleeve, with Peter Grant credit, 'Led Zeppelin' at bottom, 'Pecko Duck' etched onto runout groove on Side One and 'Porky' on Side Two, matrix numbers A3 and B3 is **£300**

LED ZEP RARITIES

10 HOUSES OF THE HOLY (1973)

Houses Of The Holy was an attempt by the band to move away from the blues-driven rock format in order to broaden musical horizons. It was only semi-successful, as alongside such essential tracks as *The Rain Song* and *No Quarter* sat the not wholly successful cod-reggae of *D'yer Mak'er* and dodgy funk of *The Crunge*.

Rarest 1973 Atlantic, with obi, unlaminated sleeve **£150**
Latest 2015 Swan Song **£25**

9 OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY
(1973)

The slow-building, semi-acoustic *Over The Hills And Far Away* is the third track on *Houses Of The Holy* and was released as a single in the US, with *Dancing Days* popping up on the B-side. It's one of Led Zep's lighter, poppier moments on vinyl, which may explain why the single failed to dent the Top 50.

Rarest US release **£8-£10**

8 LED ZEPPELIN IV
(1971)

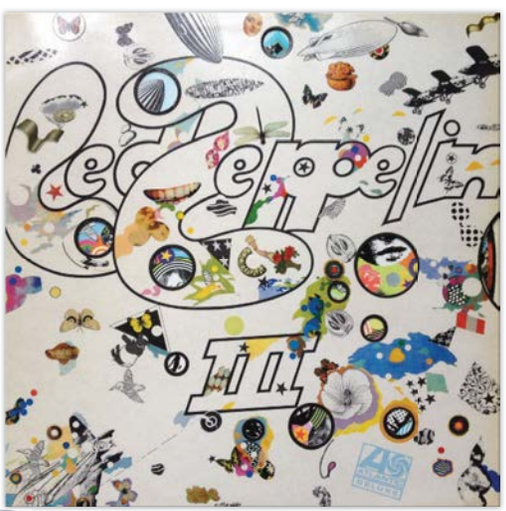
Led Zeppelin IV was the album where it all came together for rock's newly appointed golden gods. From the fierce primal energy of *Black Dog* and *Rock And Roll* to the mystical *The Battle Of Evermore* featuring Fairport Convention's Sandy Denny, the band's heavy rock-blues leanings mesh seamlessly with their mystical folk ramblings to create a pitch-perfect statement of their immense talent.

Rarest 1971 Atlantic **£250**
Latest 2014 Atlantic **£25**

7 BLACK DOG
(1971)

It was John Paul Jones and not Lord Of The Riffs, Page, who summoned up *Black Dog*'s signature guitar part. Story has it the hypnotic riff to this US 45 came to him while on a train and was scribbled down on the back of his ticket for safekeeping. The title was inspired by a randy black lab that used to hang around the recording studio at Headley Grange in Hampshire.

Rarest US release **£10-£15**



6 LED ZEPPELIN III
(1970)

For the third album, guitarist and vocalist retreated to Bron-Yr-Aur, a remote country hideaway near Snowdonia. With pastoral tracks such as *Gallows Pole* and *Tangerine*, the resulting album is a more folk-orientated affair than the previous two. This change of course in musical direction flummoxed many members of the band's hard-rocking fanbase at the time.

Rarest 1970 Atlantic, first pressing **£200**
Latest 2014 Atlantic **£25**

5 IMMIGRANT SONG
(1970)

Ah-ah, ah! After a trip to the land of the ice and snow – Iceland – Robert Plant was sufficiently inspired to tap into his inner viking and deliver a howling tale of war-making and Valhalla. First pressings of the US single have a quote from Aleister Crowley inscribed in the runout groove: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law."

Rarest US release **£10-£15**

4 LED ZEPPELIN II
(1969)

Led Zeppelin II appeared on the racks a mere nine months after its predecessor. While the former was a replication of the band's raw live sound, this sophomore release ups the studio sophistication and showcases Plant's growing influence as a songwriter. The electrified blues standards remain (*Whole Lotta Love*, *The Lemon Song*) and are complemented by a touch of Tolkien (*Ramble On*).

Rarest 1970 Atlantic, first pressing **£450**
Latest 2014 Atlantic **£30**

3 WHOLE LOTTA LOVE
(1969)

The unmistakable riff that propels Led Zeppelin's first hit single in the US was written on Jimmy Page's houseboat on the Thames at Pangbourne. Robert Plant's lyrics, however, were written by Willie Dixon in 1962, and after an out-of-court settlement in 1985, the Chicago bluesman received a (presumably) hefty cheque and a co-writing credit.

Rarest 1969 Atlantic, misprinted label **£25**

2 LED ZEPPELIN
(1969)

After the implosion of the Yardbirds, it was time for Jimmy Page to unleash his new musical vision. The result was a thunderously spontaneous debut that spectacularly fused together borrowed blues and big rock riffs. With monster tracks such as *Communication Breakdown*, *Dazed And Confused* and *Good Times Bad Times*, the legend began here.

Rarest 1969 Atlantic, first pressing **£1,500**
Latest 2014 Atlantic **£30**

1 GOOD TIMES BAD TIMES
(1969)

The bluesy fuzz of Led Zeppelin's debut US 45 was a fearsome opening salvo of intent from a band openly flexing its muscles. With Robert Plant's visceral vocals and Jimmy Page's staccato riffing coupled with John Bonham's skittering drums and John Paul Jones' vibrating bassline, world domination was a matter of 'when' and not 'if'. ●

Rarest US release **£20**

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KING OF LABELS

From porch blues to the golden age of rockstars turfing TVs out of hotel windows, **Gareth Murphy** profiles the eventful history of the King Kong of the rock 'n' roll jungle...

"What is the greatest record label of all time?" If you were to ask a hall full of American record collectors, the favourite would surely have to be Atlantic. There'd be heavy competition, alright – Motown, Island, Elektra, Warner, Verve and other contenders that each captured a time or genre. But for depth and longevity, no other American imprint has managed to stay so close to the cutting edge for so many decades.

Begun as a one-room indie in October 1947, Atlantic's early roster reads like a roll call for the founders of R&B: Ray Charles, Ruth Brown, Clyde McPhatter, Big Joe Turner, The Clovers, LaVern Baker, Ivory Joe Hunter, The Coasters… Featuring mostly black artists, and always different, its early jazz releases included masters such as John Coltrane, Charles Mingus, Erroll Garner, Ornette Coleman, The Modern Jazz Quartet, Herbie Mann and Joe Zawinul. Then came the soul pioneers of the 1960s: Carla Thomas, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Ben E. King, Solomon Burke, The Isley Brothers, The Mar-Keys, Percy Sledge, Roberta Flack. But it was psychedelic rock that pushed Atlantic into the major league: Cream; Buffalo Springfield; Dr. John; Crosby, Stills & Nash; The Allman Brothers; Led Zeppelin. Even The Rolling Stones' most popular records – *Sticky Fingers* and *Exile On Main St.* – were tailor-made for Atlantic in a spirit of career-culminating reverence. Later, from Chic to AC/DC, all the way to today's quirkier R&B stars such as Janelle Monáe, Atlantic has consistently remained the hottest of the soul kitchens.

IN THE THICK OF IT

The secret of Atlantic's huge success was the taste and passion of its owners. Indeed, if you were to run another survey – this time amongst music-biz veterans, the winner of the greatest-ever record impresario would have to go to Ahmet Ertegun, the founder of Atlantic. He and his main partner, Jerry Wexler, truly were game-changing renaissance men who brought a crusading intellect to the ailing music business at a time when, like today, record production was only crawling back to life after two decades of near-death, bargain-bin recession.

Raised in luxurious homes between Bern, Paris, London and Washington DC, Ahmet Ertegun was the rebel son of Turkey's most senior ambassador. A teenager during the war, he became such an avid collector of jazz records at Maxie Waxie – his favourite Washington DC store – that on his first trip to New York, he talked the embassy's chauffeur into dropping him off at the Plantation Club in Harlem. The next morning, when he trundled, bleary eyed and smiling, into the Turkish Consulate, the NYPD were investigating what was believed to be a diplomatic kidnapping.

It would become the overarching theme of Ahmet Ertegun's extraordinary career: into old age, he remained a cheeky obsessive who club crawled till dawn, befriending musicians, making trouble and never caring about the consequences. After completing his philosophy degree, he set up Atlantic Records, aged 24, with Herb Abramson, one of New York's best jazz producers. It was Abramson who taught the young Turk how to produce and manufacture records, before being drafted into the Army. By 1953, with Abramson posted to Germany, ▶

(l to r): Ahmet Ertegun, Jerry Wexler and Big Joe Turner at the pressing plant inspecting copies of Turner's 1956 single, *Corrine Corrina*

Ertegun found a new partner in Jerry Wexler, a brilliant music writer from *Billboard* magazine. Wexler's social background in The Bronx and Washington Heights couldn't have differed more from Ertegun's. His father had been a biblical scholar, who cleaned windows for a living. Although literate and proud, the Wexlers were a poor Jewish family struggling through the Depression alongside even poorer black families. Having served in the Army, Wexler, as a writer, had coined the 'Rhythm & Blues' moniker to replace the insulting genre term of 'race records' that had been in use since the 1920s.

As Atlantic's in-house sound engineer, Tom Dowd, put it, Jerry Wexler had been forged "out of strife, out of oppression. By living in New York and being gregarious – and so conscious of oppression – he had a natural empathy for the blues and jazz musicians. He'd always be in Harlem dancing, picking it up first-hand, and just having a good time".

On Wexler's first day, Ahmet summed up Atlantic's mission with a striking image: "There's a black man living in the outskirts of Opelousas, Louisiana. He works hard for money; he has to be tight with a dollar. One morning, he hears a song on the radio. It's urgent, it's bluesy, authentic, irresistible. He becomes obsessed. He can't live without this record. He drops everything, jumps in his pickup and drives 25 miles to the first record store he finds. If we can make that kind of music, we can make it in the music business!"

Between the founder's flair and Wexler's evangelical grit, 'Ahmet and Wex', as they became known in the trade, made an unstoppable producer-entrepreneur duo. From around 1954, Atlantic knocked out hit after hit, including the very pre-Elvis track, *Shake, Rattle And Roll* by Joe Turner, that inspired the subsequent genre term rock 'n' roll. Most were recorded in their modest office, on the shadier end of 56th Street. They'd simply push their desks against the walls and set up their sound gear. And because they scouted for talent all night and all over America, Herb Abramson's wife Miriam, herself a hard-nosed jazz connoisseur, became the reliable 9-to-5 office manager. She described Atlantic's ambition as being "the Tiffany" of the record business. "Other record companies or music publishers were all the same to me: their cultural and intellectual level was somewhere between the palm tree and the potted plant."

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Atlantic's rivals tended to be in smaller cities such as Memphis, Cincinnati or Chicago, and were typically run by grubby despots who spoke like members of the Gambino family. In a class of its own, Atlantic was a roundtable gang of New Yorker bohemians who'd not only read the entire works of William Faulkner, they were friends with Manhattan's journalists and writers.

They even paid royalties, at a time when black musicians were routinely ripped off. As Ben E. King describes: "This was a whole different bunch of people to those I had been meeting in the South: people that would not only accept you as a talent, but accept you as a person and leave room for you to make suggestions. I am from an era and a place where people would say, 'Hey, you don't talk until you're talked to'. And then I was brought to New York City, where people asked me for advice! I said, 'Wow, where is this guy Ahmet coming from?'"

ATLANTIC'S SUNKEN TREASURE

DR. JOHN
GRIS-GRIS

If you haven't heard of this 1968 cult album, it's a must-have mini masterpiece. New Orleans soul sorcerer Dr. John draws us into his smoke-filled basement of black-magic ceremony. Expect Afro-jazzy percussion, bluesy chants, Creole jiving and plenty of hypnotising psychedelic strangeness. As Danny from *Withnail & I* warned: "This doll is extremely dangerous. It has voodoo qualities."

KING CURTIS
MEMPHIS SOUL STEW

The mood-pumping grooviness of *Memphis Soul Stew* by saxophonist King Curtis and his red hot Kingpins, is one of the lesser-known gems from Atlantic's vast soul repertoire. Recorded in 1967, this three-minute epic is strutting its booty right into the future of 70s funk. It exists on 7", albeit as a B-side to a jazzy cover of *Ode To Billie Joe*.

SAM & DAVE
HOLD ON, I'M COMIN'

You've probably heard the stomping title track that opens this Stax/Atlantic album. Every record collection should have this one song, but keep your ears peeled for deeper cuts such as *Don't Make It So Hard On Me*, which also deserves standard status. Bottled lovingly in 1966, this is 12 shots of instant energy and optimism. Mid-60s soul at its absolute peak.

VANILLA FUDGE
VANILLA FUDGE

It's debatable how well this 1967 album has really aged. But if you're partial to curious reincarnations, *Vanilla Fudge* is an amusing pastiche of psychedelic covers. Often cited as precursors of heavy metal, they were synonymous with vamping up 60s ditties such as *Ticket To Ride*, *You Keep Me Hangin' On* and *She's Not There* with slithery organs, manic drums, trippy guitar and lashings of rockoid attitude.

MANU DIBANGO
SOUL MAKOSSA (ORIGINAL VERSION)

Released as an obscure French single in 1972, *Soul Makossa* became the hottest and rarest record in New York's nascent disco scene. DJs were killing each other for the few imports in circulation, until Atlantic sourced the Congolese master and released it properly. Inevitably, several convincing reproductions exist, due to the song's initial unavailability. It was even referenced by Quincy Jones on Michael Jackson's *Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'*. But as all good DJs know, Manu Dibango's original is still the best, and always guaranteed to get the party started.

CERRONE
SUPERNATURE

Disco wizard Cerrone was a French drummer who took dancefloor science a step further by manually playing and recording each drum part individually. Although requiring hours of metronomic rigidity, his technique ensured maximum floor-thumping clarity in ways that weren't possible with 1970s drum machines. If you want to know who Daft Punk copied, Cerrone's quirky, sci-fi smash hit *Supernature* (and indeed Space's *Magic Fly*, also of 1977) offers a fascinating insight into the origins of new-wave, techno-kitsch. Step in here and the modern world won't look the same again.

STACY LATTISAW
ATTACK OF THE NAME GAME

One from the 'so-bad-it's-brilliant' category, Stacy Lattislaw was a teenage pop doll of no cultural significance. Indeed, the rest of the 1982 album on which this song appears – *Sneakin' Out*, is toe-curlingly dreadful. But somehow, her producers came up with one moment of genius. Very much in the spirit of early-80s Downtown sounds such as Tom Tom Club and Grace Jones, expect bendy synths, breakbeats, childlike rap and six minutes of hip-hopping sunshine, complete with helium-balloon vocals.

IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN, ATLANTIC WAS A GANG OF BOHEMIANS – FRIENDS OF NEW YORK'S WRITERS

By 1959, Atlantic had grown into such a wealthy and dominant indie that its new recording studio, at 11 West 60th Street, was the first to install an eight-track Ampex machine. And by the time the 60s started to swing, both Atlantic and its ATCO sub-label were moving in all musical directions. Jerry Wexler continued signing and producing world-class R&B acts such as Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Percy Sledge, Dusty Springfield and Roberta Flack – often preferring to work at his favourite studio in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. They were such leaders in what was being termed 'soul', they even distributed their main rival, Stax.

Meanwhile, Ertegun was turning his attentions to pop, his first West Coast signing being Sonny & Cher, who scored a No. 1 smash hit in 1965 with *I Got You Babe*. Sniffing around Los Angeles, he then scooped Buffalo Springfield. Featuring a young Stephen Stills and Neil Young, they duly scored a Top 10 hit, *For What It's Worth (Stop, Hey What's That Sound)*.

It was around the time of this psychedelic tide-change, aged 44 and globetrotting alone, that 'Ahmet' came to personify the archetypal record mogul. With limousines, restaurant reservations and star-studded parties lined up at his every destination, he was also a regular face around London, where he signed the Bee Gees – that is, the mid-60s, pre-disco Bee Gees who American radio audiences often mistook for The Beatles.

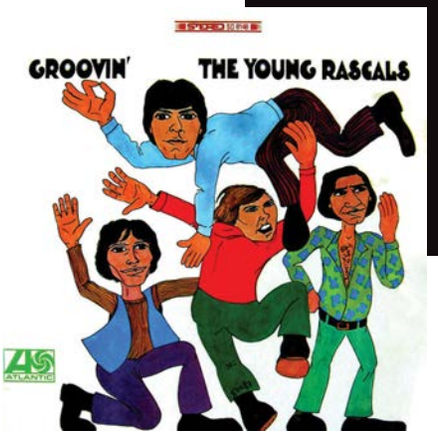
Through Bee Gees manager Robert Stigwood, he then bagged Cream in the summer of 1967. The recording of *Disraeli Gears* was a good example of how Atlantic's deep roots nourished the younger generation. Ertegun questioned the tinny sound of Cream's early London-made singles, and encouraged them to try a more ballsy, old-school approach. Reworking classic riffs in Atlantic's studio, out came blockbusting sledgehammers such as *Sunshine Of Your Love* and *Strange Brew*. "I don't know how I didn't go deaf," joked Ertegun of those high-voltage sessions. But sure enough, with a heavier, deeper sound, Cream became the first English electric-blues band to conquer America and provoke a new wave.

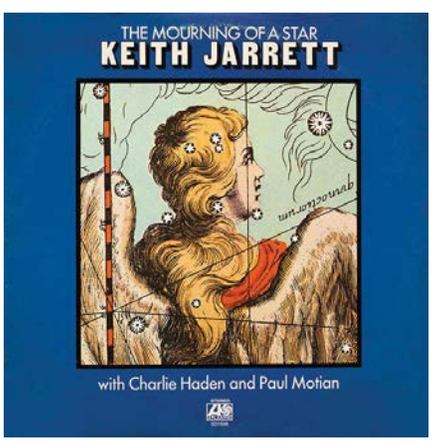
JOINING FORCES

Events came to a business and musical head around 1969, just as the fashion of supergroups was taking hold. Behind the scenes, Atlantic joined forces with Warner and Elektra to form WEA, a new distribution system, and in essence, the world's biggest major label – albeit an indie-oriented consortium joined by a corporate head – Warner Communications.

With Wall Street finance and a private jet at his disposal, Ertegun began chasing The Rolling Stones, whose contract with Decca was close to expiry. In every direction, dream teams, such as Crosby, Stills & Nash, were forming from various defunct pop groups. Also forming around then was another Atlantic supergroup, Blind Faith, and a hotly tipped project put together by Yardbirds guitarist Jimmy Page.

It was actually Jerry Wexler who won the bidding war to sign Led Zeppelin for $200,000 – a costly gamble, but a bargain nonetheless when compared to the $1 million per album that Mick Jagger eventually secured for the Stones.





IT WAS A TYPICAL STORY OF WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A NICHE INDIE BLOOMS INTO A MAINSTREAM MAJOR

With advances rocketing sky-high and the spiritual realism of R&B utterly submerged by Woodstock culture, Wexler grew to loathe the march of what he termed "rockoids". In legendary rants, he teased their florid, middle-class lyrics and predicted the onset of corporate Armageddon – an age of pampering managers, marketing gurus and vacuous baby-boomer entitlement. "A rockoid," he explained, "is a creature who originally had hair down to his ass and an out-of-tune guitar. And for some reason, got himself a million dollars by twanging away on the guitar. Suddenly, he's affected by delusions of mediocrity. Ahmet can put up with the antics of the rockoids, but I can't handle the rockoids."

Increasingly embarrassed by Wexler's old-school cynicism, Ertegun, on the other hand, embraced his most extravagant years; making millions, collecting art and jetting off to the French Riviera with the likes of Mick and Bianca Jagger. Through licence deals with Island and Charisma, he secured the American rights to prog rockers such as King Crimson, Yes, Genesis, ELP and Roxy Music – further cementing Atlantic's credentials as the rock powerhouse. Inevitably, the musical differences lead to personal estrangement, and by 1973, as Led Zeppelin broke America's box-office record previously held by The Beatles, Wexler cut an isolated, disillusioned figure in a corporation that had grown so large, he couldn't remember all the staffers' names.

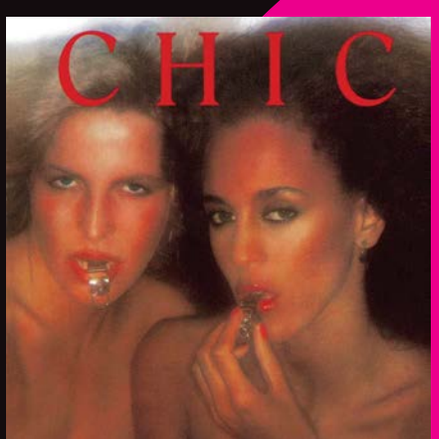
It was a typical story of what happens when a niche indie blooms into a mainstream major. Although profits kept growing, by the late 70s, Atlantic's golden age was arguably over. There would be a truck load of best-sellers to follow – among them AC/DC, Chic, Sister Sledge, Foreigner, Bette Midler, Laura Branigan and Tori Amos – but a downward trend into pop horror was in motion. Depressed and bitter about the declining state of popular culture, Wexler described his retirement as a "ballroom full of ghosts" – an idea the ever-smiling Ertegun dismissed as melodrama. "It is a mistake to invest the music we recorded with too much importance," he wrote in a thinly veiled rebuttal. "It isn't classical music, and it cannot be interpreted in the same way. It's more like the old Fred Astaire movies: They're fun, but they're not great art." Ertegun's attitude to the age of big business was simply that his job was to corrupt the corporate suits and spend their money. Being an avid soccer fan, he wined and dined his Warner landlords into investing millions in the New York Cosmos, the club that brought Pelé and Beckenbauer to America.

PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

Having built the biggest hit factory of their generation, Wexler and Ertegun would never agree on its long-term legacy. Although the intense, hulky Wexler was always the wise man amongst purists, he at least came to acknowledge that on a psychological level, "Ahmet had a true courage and insouciance. He's always been a devout, practising voluptuary. He really lived it – he gambled, took shots, and didn't worry about failure". From the 1980s, Atlantic was managed by younger executives, but Ertegun never retired as its party-throwing chairman. He remained the music industry's most lovable rogue until in 2006, he died, aged 83, after a fall backstage at a Rolling Stones concert.

For many kids today, Atlantic is simply the brand name behind Millennial pop like Ed Sheeran and Bruno Mars. But for an older generation who personally experienced the 60s and 70s, its logo will be ever synonymous with the hottest rock 'n' roll ever recorded. Greatest record label of all time? Anyone arguing the contrary would have to demolish a mountain of musical evidence that, a half-century on, still stacks up sky-high.

Put it this way, if rock 'n' roll was the single greatest genre of the last century, then it has to be Atlantic. ●



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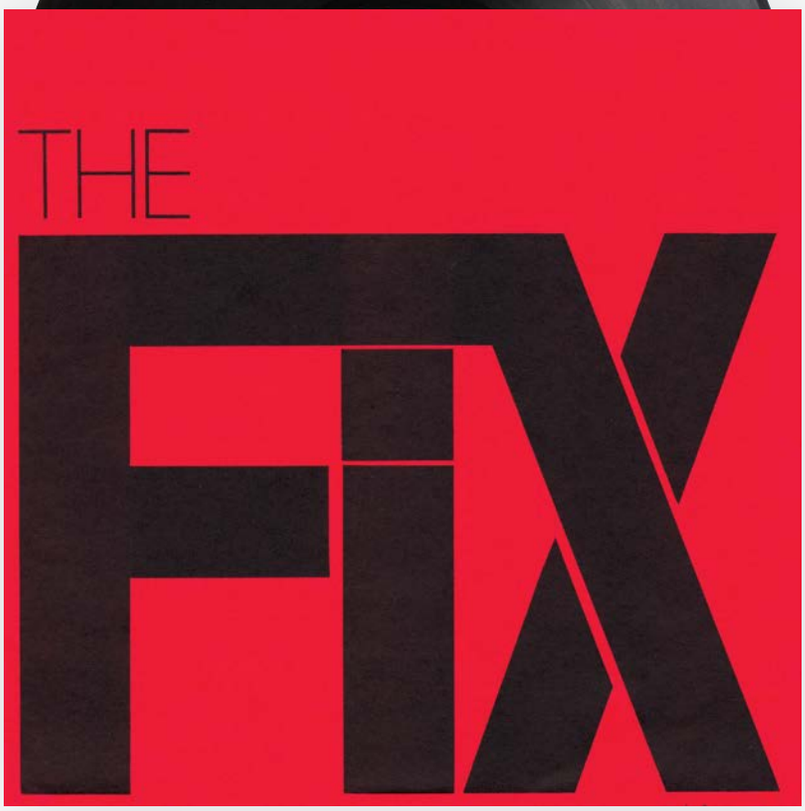

THE FIX
VENGEANCE/IN THIS TOWN
BLACK 7"

An uncompromising single limited to a 200 run, which helped establish US hardcore as a force to be reckoned with at the turn of the 1980s

WAX FACTS
The Fix
Vengeance/ In This Town
Touch And Go Records
Year **1981**
Format **Black 7"**

£ £3,000

Punk may have been born in England during the late 70s, but the early 80s belonged to US hardcore punk. With The Teen Idles, Minor Threat and Black Flag doing the rounds, more and more bands emerged, backed by DIY labels and fanzines. It was a scene rife with creativity, channelling teen angst and frustration into passionate music.

A band often overlooked in the annals of the scene are Michigan's The Fix. They lasted just less than two years, but had the first vinyl release through iconic Midwestern label, Touch And Go. Their debut 7", *Vengeance* b/w *In This Town*, is pure, unhinged hardcore at its best and helped lay the foundation for a burgeoning record label to build a scene rivalling SST in California and Dischord in D.C.

As the years have gone by, not only have The Fix become part of punk-rock lore, their debut 7" is now considered one of the rarest punk singles in existence. With its minimal sleeve design, and only 200 copies pressed, it isn't much to look at, but has reached over £3,000 in online bidding wars. Very few copies have ever been sold on the open market, with some probably falling by the wayside, or buried deep in the collections of former hardcore kids.

The Fix had only one more release after this, *Jan's Rooms*, which has become another incredibly desirable record for Touch And Go collectors. Even if it hasn't reached the hardcore Holy Grail status of something like *Chung King Can Suck It* by Judge, its importance and rarity can never be understated.

Glen Bushell

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REMEMBERING NICK DRAKE

As what would have been his 70th birthday approaches, Green Gartside and John Parish help **Jonathan Wright** reflect on the life and career of a legendary artist who left us too soon…

Close to five decades after Nick Drake released his debut album, *Five Leaves Left*, it seems incredible that so few people at the time really noticed his talent. Today, Drake's albums sell thousands of copies each year. In 2005, when Radio Two broadcast *Lost Boy: In Search Of Nick Drake*, Brad Pitt found time in his A-list schedule to narrate. Drake, who would have turned 70 in June this year, is part of the firmament.

In death, he's been accorded a wider public respect to match the admiration of his 1960s contemporaries: musicians such as John Martyn, Richard Thompson, Danny Thompson and John Cale, and the legendary producer Joe Boyd. But why is it that Drake's records sold so poorly during his lifetime? Why couldn't he reliably connect with an audience? Why didn't his music come to wider notice until long after he had been discovered dead at the age of 26 in 1974, following an overdose of anti-depressants?

One place to try to begin to understand what happened is in Drake's producer Joe Boyd's initial reaction to hearing the singer-songwriter's reel-to-reel demo, which included *The Thoughts Of Mary Jane* and *Time Has Told Me*. In his memoir, *White Bicycles: Making Music In The 1960s*, Boyd writes: "The music stayed within itself, not trying to attract the listener's attention, just making itself available. His guitar technique was so clean, it took a while to realise how complex it was."

Boyd's words beautifully capture the understated quality of Drake's music. Whisper it – and somehow, whispering seems apposite – but some people don't *get* Nick Drake. Until, perhaps, a song one day connects and magically unlocks the rest of his work.

Others react more immediately. One of the first records that Green Gartside of Scritti Politti bought was an Island sampler from 1969, *Nice Enough To Eat:* "which I was able to buy because it went out for less than half the price of a normal album". It featured tracks from the likes of Jethro Tull, Free and Traffic, but it was Drake's *Time Has Told Me*, from *Five Leaves Left*, that "absolutely astonished" Gartside.

"It's just melodically beautiful, it's harmonically beautiful and, while Nick Drake could occasionally get a little Victorian poetic, *Time Has Told Me* is a beautiful lyric," Gartside says. "It's an almost faultless song, brought to perfection by Richard Thompson's guitar playing."

In recent years, at Boyd's behest, Gartside has performed Drake's music in *Way To Blue* tribute shows. In Gartside's estimation: "He is exquisitely articulate about the struggle over what is expected of us in adulthood and the huge disappointments that the revelations of adulthood bring."

By this, he doesn't just mean lyrically. In Drake's work, music and words are bound tightly together to create mood and atmosphere. "It has a lot to do with what he found in the guitar, the tunings that he used, the picking, where his fingers led him," says Gartside. "What you hear in that is all the hours spent alone. That's not the sound of a collectively made music, that's not the sound of anyone who wants to be in a band, that's not 'learn three chords and get together with a guy down the street.'"

EARLY YEARS

So how did Drake come to develop this intense musical skill? He was born on 19 June 1948 in Yangon (Rangoon), Burma. Back in the UK, Drake's father, Rodney, rose to become managing director of ▶

Wolseley Engineering. Drake was raised within an English upper-middle-class milieu at Far Leys, a grand and graceful house in Tanworth-in-Arden, Warwickshire.

Both parents were musical. In particular, Molly Drake was a poet and songwriter who, while she never published or released anything professionally during her lifetime, was genuinely accomplished, as the retrospectively released *Molly Drake* (2013), a collection of home recordings from the 1950s, shows. There's a sombre and fragile quality to the songs that foreshadows her son's later work.

Drake attended Marlborough College public school, where he played in a group called The Perfumed Gardeners. He was a decent athlete, a sprinter and a rugby player. Yet there was always a slightly elusive quality to Drake, even to those closest to him. "[In one of his school reports, the headmaster] said at the end that none of us seemed to know him very well," his father said. "And I think that was it. All the way through with Nick, people didn't know him very much." When he went on to study English Literature at Cambridge, Drake preferred to stay in his room rather than continue to play the sports at which he'd once excelled.

THE PATTERN OF HIS DAYS BECAME PLAY GUITAR, SMOKE JOINTS, GO OUT FOR A CURRY

Indeed, it's astonishing Drake ever got discovered at all. In February 1968, he supported Country Joe And The Fish at a benefit show at the Roundhouse. In attendance was Ashley Hutchings, and not only was the bassist with Fairport Convention impressed by Drake's guitar playing, but he thought Drake looked "like a star", information he passed to Joe Boyd. The most crucial connection – in a musical career where connection was so often lacking – was made.

FIRST SESSIONS

In July 1968, Drake began recording his debut album, *Five Leaves Left*, with Boyd and engineer John Wood at Sound Techniques in London. In *White Bicycles,* Boyd says his approach was inspired in part by John Simon's production work on *Songs Of Leonard Cohen* (1967): "Simon had adorned the tracks with choruses, strings and other additions that set off Cohen's voice without ever overwhelming it or sounding cheesy."

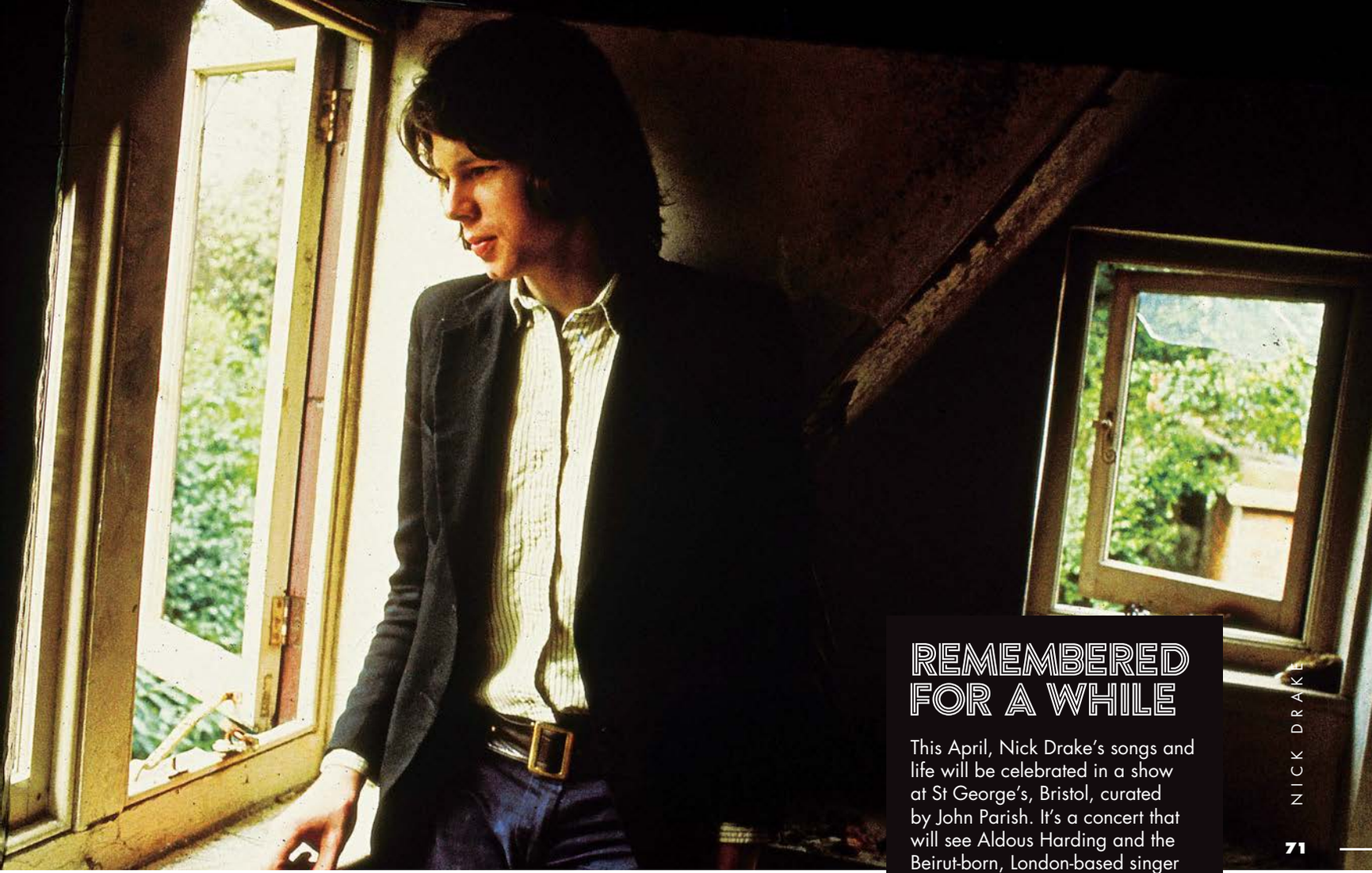
Eventually, the approach worked, although only after Boyd had canned "competent, mediocre and slightly fey" string arrangements by Richard Hewson in favour of letting Drake work with an old friend from Cambridge, Robert Kirby. Except on *River Man*, however, where Kirby stood aside for composer and musical director Harry Robinson (later famed for his Hammer scores), because he was worried he wasn't up to conjuring the sound Drake wanted.

Island released *Five Leaves Left* in 1969. John Peel played the album, but it sold poorly. It didn't help that Drake, who found social situations increasingly difficult as he got older, was useless at promoting his music. He gave just one interview to the music press, to Jerry Gilbert of *Sounds* in 1971.

Gigs were often a painful ordeal, with a particular nadir an appearance at a social club in Smethwick, near Birmingham, where a disinterested crowd ignored Drake. "That really destroyed him," Drake's close friend John Martyn later told Radio One. On another occasion, supporting Ralph McTell at Ewell Technical College, Drake walked off halfway through *Fruit Tree*. McTell: "Something awful must have happened."

It probably didn't help, suggests producer and longtime PJ Harvey collaborator John Parish, that in an age before guitar techs and having multiple instruments lined up, Drake would've presumably had to pause often to retune his guitar. "If you're going along as a casual listener, that's not going to win you over unless you particularly like the Heath Robinson-esque nature of it," says Parish.

All of this took a toll and Drake began to retreat further into himself, spending long hours alone in his room in Hampstead.



According to Boyd: "He had always smoked hashish, but that now became the pattern of his days: play guitar and smoke joints, go out for a curry when he got hungry."

Nevertheless, Boyd began planning a second album, *Bryter Layter* (1971). Those who performed on the album included John Cale, whom Boyd met while working on Nico's *Desertshore* (1970). After Boyd played Drake's music to him, Cale became animated: "Who the fuck is this guy? I have to meet him, where is he? I mean where is he *right now*?" Cale performed on *Fly* and *Northern Sky*, sweeping Drake along with his energy.

But *Bryter Layter* was another miserable commercial failure. Boyd, so long Drake's advocate and supporter, relocated back to the USA. In 1971, Drake's worried family persuaded him to visit a psychiatrist. He was prescribed antidepressants, but continued to smoke heavy amounts of cannabis and, according to some accounts, started to show the first signs of psychosis.

LUNAR RISING

There was, of course, to be one more major chapter in his musical life, Drake's stark 1972 masterpiece *Pink Moon* (covered in more depth, along with Drake's final years in our Classic Album feature on p72), but there's something eerily compelling about this period in Drake's brief life.

The younger Drake, for all he seemed set apart, was often surrounded by people: his family, schoolmates, university friends and admiring musicians. But looking in from the outside, it's hard not to conclude that, as Drake hit a crisis point, such support networks had proven temporarily unequal to the Herculean task of shoring up such a fragile talent, a foreshadowing of the tragedy that lay ahead.

If only things had worked out differently. For a glimpse of what might have been, remember that in September 1969, Drake supported Fairport Convention at the Royal Festival Hall, a show to mark the band's re-emergence after a horrific bus crash that killed drummer Martin Lamble.

On a night of rarefied emotions, recalled Joe Boyd, when the audience was of a collective mind to be attentive and respectful even to a largely unknown support act: "I could feel the affection surging towards the stage". He pushed his charge back into the spotlight to perform an encore and, caught up in the moment, dared to believe that it didn't matter Drake couldn't talk to an audience, that he could have "a real career". Perhaps, in another timeline, he did. ●

REMEMBERED FOR A WHILE

This April, Nick Drake's songs and life will be celebrated in a show at St George's, Bristol, curated by John Parish. It's a concert that will see Aldous Harding and the Beirut-born, London-based singer Nadine Khouri performing Drake's songs. The Lochrian String Quartet will perform on new arrangements of Drake's songs by Rob Ellis (PJ Harvey, Marianne Faithfull) and Enrico Gabrielli (PJ Harvey, Calibro 35).

In the week before the concert, says Parish, he will be rehearsing the show. "I actually love working like that, it feels very concise, very focused," he says, "and, because it's a very finite thing, it's very easy for people to say, 'Okay, that week, that's what I'm thinking about', and you can get really detailed about what you're doing, and everybody is in the same mental space. I think it's a really creative way of working."

Unlike some of these kinds of shows, Parish has deliberately opted to use a limited number of singers. "You actually, as a listener, get used to them doing this thing. Hopefully, by the third song, you're not thinking of the Nick Drake version, you are hearing this person singing." As opposed to thinking, 'Oh, it's Jarvis?' "Exactly."

Classic Album
NICK DRAKE
PINK MOON

The final album by Nick Drake was recorded in a time of turmoil and sold next to no copies upon its first release. Yet, as **Jonathan Wright** explains, its reputation has grown steadily with the passing years…

NICK DRAKE
PINK MOON

COVER STORY

Originally, Island had intended to use shots of Drake taken by photographer Keith Morris for the cover. However, put off by the haunted singer's deteriorating appearance and hunched-over posture, the company decided to go with artwork instead, ultimately using a surreal painting by Michael Trevithick, a friend of Drake's sister, Gabrielle

ONLY THREE

Drake, signed to Island Records, released only three albums during his lifetime – 1969's Five Leaves Left, 1971's Bryter Layter and 1972's Pink Moon. There have been many compilations, however, as well as Family Tree from 2007 – a fascinating collection of home demos and sketches, which also features performances by his sister and mother

ALONE AGAIN

Unlike its predecessors, Pink Moon didn't feature any accompanying musicians. Five Leaves Left was recorded with Fairport Convention's Richard Thompson and Pentangle's Danny Thompson; while Bryter Layter featured members of The Beach Boys

SONG IN THE SHADOW

The Pink Moon tapes that Drake delivered to Island included a minute-long guitar-only recording of French classical song Plaisir d'amour; however, a note in the package referred to the song as "Spare title – do not use", so it was dropped from its place in the running order at the start of Side Two

Nick Drake recorded *Pink Moon* in just two sessions at Chelsea's Sound Techniques studio

Getty

In October 1971, Nick Drake was, to the surprise of many around him, ready to make his third album. But the singer-songwriter's circumstances had changed since the recording of the commercially unsuccessful *Bryter Layter*. At the end of 1970, producer Joe Boyd – a key figure not just in Drake's career but in that of Fairport Convention, Sandy Denny and The Incredible String Band – had taken a job in the USA with Warner Brothers. An outsider who arguably did as much as anyone to teach the British about the validity and soulfulness of their own roots music, folk, Boyd had extricated himself from his company, Witchseason Productions.

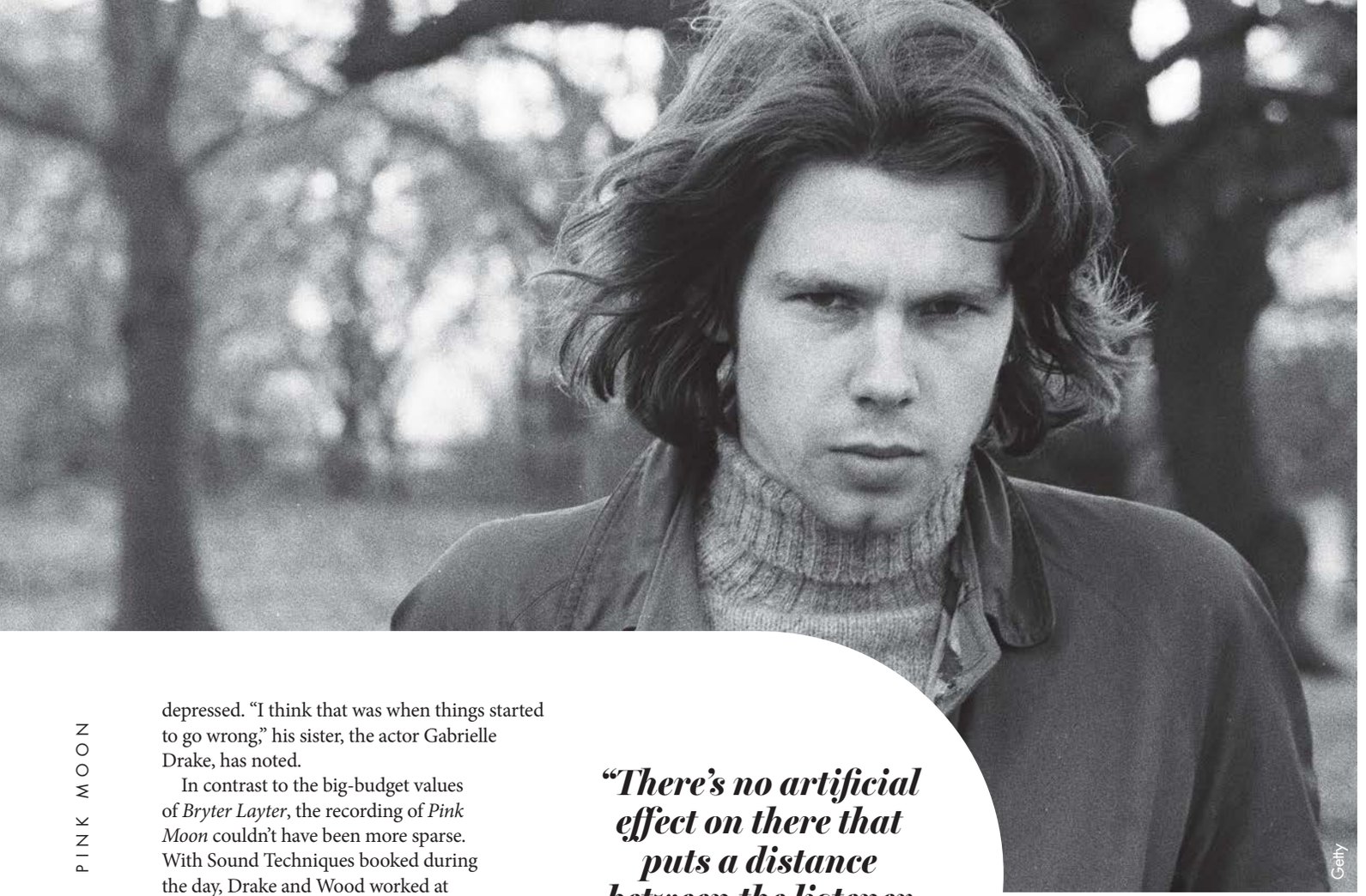
As it happened, at least in terms of recording *Pink Moon*, this didn't matter much. Boyd wasn't a conventional producer. Throughout his most productive years in London, working at the Sound Techniques studio in Chelsea, his regular engineer was John Wood, a man who, as Boyd tells it in *White Bicycles*, didn't do deference: "When I wanted to do something he thought unwise, he would give me a withering sneer. You want to *what*?!?". If the idea was strong enough, Boyd stood his ground. If his "resolve melted in the face of [Wood's] contempt, it probably wasn't such a good idea in the first place".

"Pink Moon seems to have been a reaction to Bryter Layter – itself a jazzier, poppier, more direct album than Five Leaves Left"

Wood was a fine technician who would go on to produce hits such as *Cool For Cats* for Squeeze, a man who knew how to get the most from rooms at Sound Techniques, not just with the mixing desk but by subtly repositioning or changing a microphone or, when needed, moving a musician to another spot. Wood had worked on Drake's first two records. A strong personal bond had built up between the two, and Wood and his wife would invite Drake over to their Greenwich home for dinner when the singer's habitual wan demeanour became especially worrying. In 1971, refreshed after a break in Spain at a villa owned by Island Records boss Chris Blackwell, it was logical that Drake would approach Wood.

IMMEDIATELY DARKER

The album he wanted to make seems to have been a direct reaction to *Bryter Layter*, a jazzier, poppier, more direct album than *Five Leaves Left*, which featured contributions from John Cale, various Fairports, PP Arnold, and Beach Boys musicians Mike Kowalski and Ed Carter. Drake, Boyd has said, may have felt left out of an album that bore his name as those surrounding him "moved happily into the vacuum created by his diffidence". Worse, having agreed to this approach, the album's commercial failure left Drake



depressed. "I think that was when things started to go wrong," his sister, the actor Gabrielle Drake, has noted.

In contrast to the big-budget values of *Bryter Layter*, the recording of *Pink Moon* couldn't have been more sparse. With Sound Techniques booked during the day, Drake and Wood worked at night. While the album is brief – just 28 minutes – in length, it seems astonishing that it took only two sessions to lay down the tracks. No overdubs, bar a brief piano part on the title track, were added.

If this makes it sound as if it was a simple job to record the songs, it's worth listening to producer John Parish on the subject of *Pink Moon*. He says that one of his aims, especially when working with singer-songwriters, is to capture "intimacy" so that "other people can hear that same thing" – something Parish did beautifully on two of the albums of 2017, *Party* by Aldous Harding and This Is The Kit's *Moonshine Freeze*.

"For me, *Pink Moon* as a recording does that really well," he says. "There's something about it – obviously, it's about the performance and the material – but it's about the recording of it that's very *engaging*. You really feel like you're there. I think it's allowing things. There are mistakes, there are slips in the playing sometimes, there's no artificial effect on there that puts a distance between the listener and the singer, so you feel very much like he's right in front of you. So I love it as a recording, but it feels absolutely timeless to me, it doesn't feel as though it was recorded years ago. To me, that's amazing."

Or, as John Wood put it in a 1979 radio interview: "Drake was very determined to make this very stark, bare record. He definitely wanted it to be him more than anything. And I think, in some ways, *Pink Moon* is probably more like Nick is than the other two records."

It says much about the mythology surrounding Drake that even the story of the delivery of the *Pink Moon* master tapes to Island Records has taken on a strange life of its own. According to legend, Drake simply left the tapes at reception, but this seems to be an exaggeration. According to Island press officer David Sandison, speaking to the Drake fanzine *Pynk Moon* in 1996, Drake at the very least stayed around at the offices before, on his way out, leaving the master, which quickly had to be duplicated to head off the possibility of the only copy being accidentally lost or damaged.

> ***"There's no artificial effect on there that puts a distance between the listener and the singer"***
>
> JOHN PARISH ON *PINK MOON*

Then it was over to Island to commission artwork and promote the album. Neither were easy tasks when working with Drake. A photoshoot by Keith Morris, who took the picture that adorns *Bryter Layter*, revealed a man whose bedraggled appearance reflected his battles with depressive illness, which may explain why none of the images were used. "Certain sessions you remember for their colour," he told Drake's biographer, Patrick Humphries (*Nick Drake: The Biography*). "I remember that one because I don't remember a single colour. Everything about it was grey."

Asked for his own ideas about a cover, Drake conveyed to Island's creative director, Annie Sullivan, that he simply wanted it to reflect the title. A Dali-recalling piece by artist Michael Trevithick, by coincidence a friend of Nick's sister Gabrielle, got the nod.

SAW IT WRITTEN

Island, a company with a justifiable reputation for standing by its artists, took out full-page advertisements in all the major music magazines on the album's release in February 1972. Sandison's PR copy to promote the album stated: "We believe that Nick Drake is a great talent. His first two albums haven't sold a shit. But if we carry on releasing them, then maybe someone authoritative will stop, listen properly and agree with us."

Nick Drake on Hampstead Heath in January 1972 – part of the unused *Pink Moon* photoshoot by Keith Morris

Explaining why he did this, Sandison told Patrick Humphries: "I don't know what else I could have done. It was a statement of faith as much as anything: we'll stay here as long as he wants to make records." And, even if it seemed a somewhat desperate move, it was at least prescient on Sandison's part, because subsequently, people have taken the time to stop to listen.

John Parish remembers receiving a copy of the remastered vinyl album from Cally Callomon, who oversees Drake's estate on behalf of his family. "I was struck by how I didn't know it how I thought I knew it," he remembers, "but how when I heard it with that degree of focus, I had to start again as soon as I'd played it once."

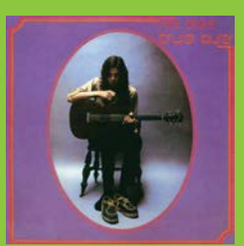
Within Drake's own lifetime, though, there were to be no such moments of affirmation, or at least not enough of them. As with his previous albums, *Pink Moon* flopped. Having returned from Spain in an optimistic frame of mind, Drake's mental state again declined. Early in 1972, he had a nervous breakdown and was hospitalised; he returned to live with his parents. "I don't like it at home," he told his mother, Molly, "but I can't bear it anywhere else."

Promoting *Nick Drake: Remembered For A While*, a coffee-table volume mixing family photographs, repro memorabilia, musical analysis and essays, in 2014, Gabrielle Drake discussed her brother's troubles with *The Guardian*'s Stuart Jeffries. "It's so easy to come up with trite answers – that he came from a stuffy, upper-middle-class background, nobody understood him. That kind of thing," she said. "Well, everybody did understand him and *still* it happened."

In early 1974, according to Joe Boyd's *White Bicycles*, Drake paid him a visit. His hair was greasy, his hands were dirty. "More unnervingly, he was angry," wrote Boyd. "I had

Nick Drake On Vinyl

Collecting Nick Drake is not for those with shallow pockets. Assuming you can find early pressings, the prices are eye-watering. As *Long Live Vinyl* went to press, there were two copies of the pink-label Island UK release of *Five Leaves Left* in a fold-out cover for sale on Discogs. Yours for just £900 or £1,250. And although *Bryter Layter* and *Pink Moon* are typically a little cheaper, prices soon rise for releases in near-mint condition.



For those who don't have the early-pressing collecting bug, it's probably worth considering the 21st-century vinyl remasters. Commenting on the *Pink Moon* remaster, John Parish, a man highly suspicious of "fancy modern remastering to make [music] brighter and louder", wryly says: "It was really done as faithfully as possible. Because it's a hi-fi geek release, there are notes that I dutifully, as a hi-fi geek, read to understand." You can pick up a mint/near-mint boxset version first issued in 2012 for around £50.

As for rare items, Discogs has a radio-promo sampler from 1979 available for around £130. But for the truly committed prepared to spend a lifetime waiting, if lucky, for a single chance to buy an item that will clean out a savings account, there's an item that doesn't even feature Drake himself. In 1970, Boyd recorded the so-called *Warlock Demo*.

It featured covers of Drake songs, including *Time Has Told Me*, by a then-obscure session singer, Elton John, and was intended to drum up business for Boyd's artists as songwriters for hire. A hundred copies were pressed up and just six are known still to exist. They include John's own copy, which, it's said, is one of two records the singer kept when he auctioned his collection for charity in 1993. The other was a copy of 'The White Album', signed by all four Beatles.

The songs

Nick Drake vocals, acoustic guitar, piano overdub on *Pink Moon*
John Wood producer, engineer

Michael Trevithick artwork
Keith Morris photography
CCS Associates typography

Recorded 30-31 October 1971 at Sound Techniques studio, London
Released 25 February 1972, Island Records

1 *PINK MOON*

Drake's repetitive lyrics see him intoning the words "pink" and "moon" again and again. As if realising it's dangerously close to a sketch of a song, Drake tries various intonations and seems to struggle before it's over – perhaps, suggests Amanda Petrusich in her *33 1/3* series book on the album, because his guitar's tuning is too low for him to sing comfortably.

Despite this, there's a haunting quality to the song. It's somehow much, much more than the sum of its parts, as proven by its popularity after being used in a Volkswagen ad in 1999. This also gives it an important place in the posthumous Drake story, because the song was so many people's way in to his music.

2 *PLACE TO BE*

If *Pink Moon* manages a kind of strained good humour, *Place To Be* is a song that's hard to listen to without thinking of Drake's subsequent fate. "I was strong, strong in the sun/ I thought I'd see when day was done/ Now I'm weaker than the palest blue," he sings in the final verse.

3 *ROAD*

While his picking is spikier and sharper than on earlier records, as if he can't quite hide the underlying anger Joe Boyd would write about, *Road* reminds you how gloriously adept Drake was as a guitar player. Again, the lyric offers scant hope, because although Drake sings: "You can take the road that takes you to the stars now", he immediately follows it with a kicker: "I can take a road that'll see me through." The sense that Drake is condemned to take his road while others get to make a choice is palpable.

4 *WHICH WILL*

Once again, Drake is looking on at other people's choices: "Which will you love the best?/ Which do you dance for?/ Which makes you shine?… Which will you take now/ If you won't take me?". The use of 'which' rather than 'what' accentuates the distance between Drake, a man who found it so hard to connect meaningfully with other people and was often described as asexual, and the person to which the song is addressed.

Superficially, this sounds like a song rooted in Americana, but maybe that's just a surface impression; because Lucinda Williams' 1992 cover, an attempt to reinvent the song as a country-tinged ballad, didn't quite come off, almost as if it needed to be more tightly rooted in the folk tradition.

The songs *continued*

5 HORN

At just a little more than a minute long, *Pink Moon*'s sole instrumental is over almost before you've noticed it. Yet with or without lyrics, Drake's music is all about creating and sustaining mood. Listen carefully and the mood is angry – even, suggests Amanda Petrusich, "funereal" – making you look anew at its similarities to the heartbreaking, utterly miserable *Black Eyed Dog*.

6 THINGS BEHIND THE SUN

In spite of its pensive and suspicious lyrics – "Please beware of them that stare/ They'll only smile to see you while/ Your time away," warns Drake in the song's opening couplet – *Things Behind The Sun* nonetheless lightens the mood, at least on first hearing.

7 KNOW

An exercise in folky minimalism, *Know* is based around a repetitive guitar riff, a largely hummed melody and 18 words of contradictory lyrics. "Know that I love you/ Know that I don't care/ Know that I see you/ Know I'm not there." The song is rooted partly in the blues and its rolling quality has been compared to *Roadhouse Blues*, but it utterly lacks the swagger of The Doors' opener to *Morrison Hotel*.

8 PARASITE

A song that's often interpreted as dealing with self-loathing. Cally Callomon, however, has warned against perceiving the song as autobiographical, and sees it simply as "commenting about parasites"…

9 FREE RIDE

We find Drake reaching out cautiously here, and it's been speculated the song may be about Sophia Ryde, who was close to Drake and ambiguously described herself as his "best (girl)friend". Shortly before his death, it emerged in 2006, Ryde said she wanted "more space in their relationship" and Drake left a letter to her. However, for a writer of Drake's accomplishment, the pun (Ryde/Ride) seems a little forced for this to be true.

10 HARVEST BREED

Another song that it's difficult not to see at least in part as a plea for help. Scared and in need of a friend, Drake is "Falling fast and falling free". We need to be careful of such interpretations, but Drake sounds doubtful here and the simplicity of the melody somehow conveys that he has other, more important things on his mind than the craft of singing.

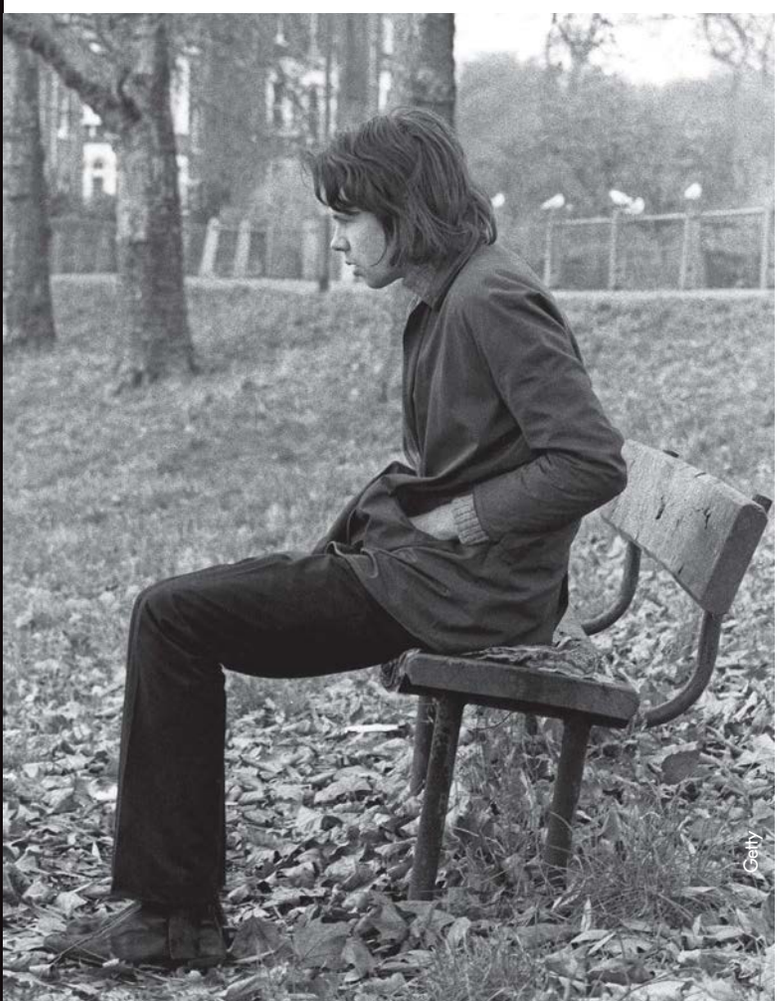
11 FROM THE MORNING

The album's closer offers a kind of qualified optimism, opening as it does with the line: "A day once dawned and it was beautiful". For once, Drake seems content to let in the light, or at least concede that it might coexist with the dark. His family chose lines from the song – "Now we rise/ And we are everywhere" – to adorn Drake's tombstone. Yet it's perhaps appropriate that, musically, it's a song that peters out, his picking first slowing down and then leaving a note to fade away. In terms of the recorded output released in his lifetime, Drake's world ends with a musical whisper.

told him he was a genius and others had concurred. So, he demanded, why wasn't he famous and rich? This rage must have festered beneath his inexpressive exterior for years."

Nevertheless, Drake wanted to record again. A session at Sound Techniques with Wood and Boyd produced, among other tracks, the haunted *Black Eyed Dog*, which has come to be a kind of self-penned elegy to set alongside John Martyn's anguished 1973 song to his friend, *Solid Air*. But Drake was in a poor state. A man who once played faultlessly while accompanied by an orchestra, laying down guitar parts intertwined with his vocals, now had to record his guitar separately from his voice. A further recording session followed, but on 25 November 1974, Drake died at his home after taking an overdose. The coroner recorded the death as suicide, although Boyd prefers to think of it as accidental. Drake was just 26 years old.

Whatever the truth of the circumstances surrounding his death, the shimmering afterlife of Drake's music shows no sign of ending. In the 1980s, he began to be namechecked by artists such as The Cure and REM. In 1999, a Volkswagen ad campaign featured the title track to *Pink Moon* and keyed off a huge uplift in sales. A man who once struggled to shift a few thousand records has posthumously clocked up sales in the millions. As for his wider influence, it's so pervasive that it's become near-impossible to escape, certainly for any artist you might file under, for want of a better phrase, nu-folk. "Cohen for the lyrics, Dylan for the attitude and the phraseology, Nick Drake for the emotion," says John Parish of the way Drake's work has permeated the wider musical culture. "I think that probably even if you spoke to a contemporary folk artist and they said, 'No I never listen to Nick Drake,' there are some things that are building blocks, they are so fundamental to the canon that that whole style of music would be different had they never existed." ●



Another Hampstead Heath shot of Drake, by Keith Morris: "It was like I was intruding on private grief," the photographer said of the session

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COVER STAR

JULIAN HOUSE

Creative director, label owner and musician Julian House is more than a cover artist. He tells **Giacomo Lee** about the 'lost' futures haunting his work, and how he defined the look of some of UK art-rock's biggest acts…

The music of the 1990s was the sound of peace. The spirit of Woodstock pervaded baggy and rave, while the general optimism of the 1960s was reborn in Britpop. It wasn't to last, and nowhere else can the trajectory of the 90s be seen clearer than through the progress of Primal Scream. The decade began with the colourful music and artwork of *Screamadelica*; it ended with the stark and colourless beats of the single *Swastika Eyes*. With a new sound came a new image, and pushing the rebranding of Primal Scream as post-punk politicos for the dancefloor was Julian House, the Newport designer whose signature collage technique will be familiar to anyone with a passing interest in 1990s indie beyond Britpop.

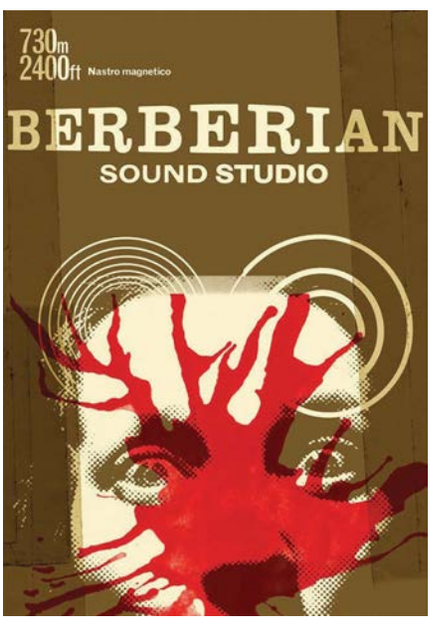
"The music felt harder, more electronic and sharp, so the artwork reflected it," House explains when talking about his work on the Scream's politicised 2000 long-player *XTRMNTR*. "The cover was meant to be a sort of crashed console game meets CNN."

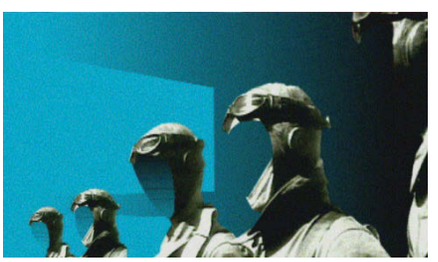
Matching that iconic cover was an iconic branding of the band's name and LP title, with stencil lettering 'exterminating' every vowel in sight, in what became just one example of House's 20-year-plus mastery of cover design and style.

THE LOOK OF LOST FUTURES

House's work over the decade before *XTRMNTR* was more characteristic of the general style of 90s indie; one could even say he defined the era's look with his body of work for two icons of musical retrofuturism, Stereolab and Broadcast. It was with Broadcast that House put together his first cover design, the sleeve for their 1996 *Accidentals* 7". Its artwork was adapted from House's MA degree show at London's Central Saint Martins college, and shows a style fully formed from the get-go. The 60s-inspired sleeve has a monochromatic mix of sine waves and vintage-manual-inspired lettering,

Julian House's distinctive collage design style incorporates his retrofuturistic "obsessions"





making something both stern and stylish that nicely sums up the Broadcast sound.

"At the height of Britpop, I was doing my MA and discovering classic modernist design and vintage electronic music, feeling that these were linked, 'lost' futures," House explains. "That informed my design and the way we talked about Broadcast."

House's ties with Broadcast stem back to his youth in Wales, where he was friends with members of the band, attending art college in Newport with keyboardist Roj Stevens.

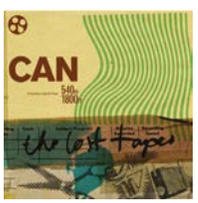
"I'd go and stay with them in Birmingham," House reminisces. "We always had plans to make music; I'd go up with piles of records and we'd listen and hatch plans. I was sort of an unofficial band member, in a way."

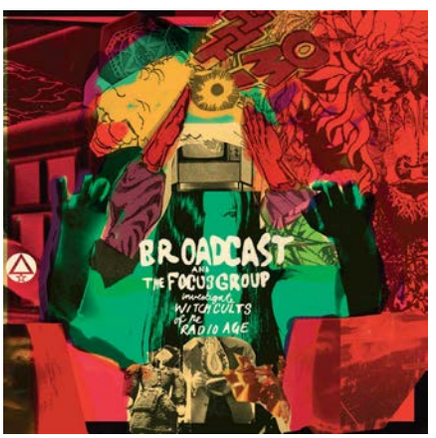
House's early forays into music were restricted to "tape loops and a primitive sampler", bought during his time at college. "I was always into music," he explains, "which is how I gravitated to LP-cover design. But I didn't necessarily see myself as a musician. It was more a case of that being the culture I was immersed in, surrounded by LPs and comics."

CULT FIGURE

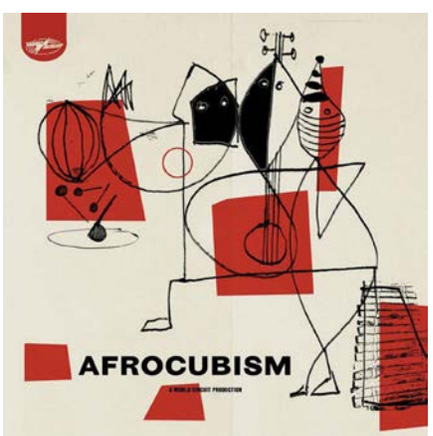
House would continue to illustrate Broadcast releases, developing his style. He says: "Whereas nostalgia seems fixed, I aim to make connections between half-remembered things to add an uncertain, more surreal element."

This visual style would ultimately bleed into *Investigate Witch Cults Of The Radio Age*, the 2009 collaborative LP between Broadcast and House's musical alias, The Focus Group. Like his earlier releases, *Investigate Witch Cults…* is a tapestry of what House calls his "various obsessions", influences such as the Radiophonic Workshop and library music laced with late-60s psychedelia and acid folk. In essence, it's music that looks like a House front cover, and the design for the Broadcast collaboration is as colourful and obtuse as the album itself. House debuted The Focus Group in 2004 on the label





"I FELT MODERNIST DESIGN AND VINTAGE ELECTRONIC MUSIC WERE LINKED, LOST FUTURES"



Ghost Box, which he set up in the same year with composer Jim Jupp. The mandate was inspired by the pair's shared appreciation for "strange children's programmes with spooky occult themes", as House puts it.

"It felt like the unifying element was how we experienced these things through the medium of television," he elaborates, "and how these things all came together in that late-60s, early-70s period, with music at times electronic, and other times informed by psychedelic folk." Much of the Ghost Box roster fits this bill, and each release comes with a sleeve designed by House himself. This comes from a push by House to make the label as much of a character in each of its releases as the artists themselves. "We always see the label as the main focus, and each of the releases as part of a bigger whole," he says. "Each LP has text and footnotes that reference the world we're creating, and other aspects of the label, like film and art exhibitions, feed back into this world."

This isn't the first time House's style has defined a record label. One only needs to look back on the work that would ultimately make his name: designing artwork for 90s indie label, Duophonic Records. Its roster was home to Broadcast, and it was run by Stereolab, for whom House produced the iconic covers that defined the art-rockers' 'look' for years to come. Try thinking of the group without picturing the strange curves and mint-green of the *Dots And Loops* LP, or the pink and cartoony 'smiling castle' of *Sound-Dust,* and you'll know what we mean.

INTRO TO FILMMAKING

Prior to the inception of Ghost Box, House became an in-demand designer for London creative agency Intro, where he's still based to this day. His work under the Intro banner has included designs for bands such as Oasis and Placebo; it's also where he started applying motion to his pictures through promo videos for the likes of Primal Scream. "The first video work was often seen as a moving-image extension of the LP artwork," he says, before returning to the subject of *XTRMNTR*-era Scream. "The video for *Kill All Hippies* was a collaboration between myself and Julian Gibbs. It was interesting because it pretty much starts with the band not wanting to be in it, and us having to figure out how to animate the artwork. That changed the way we approached music video projects at Intro."

"MY WAY OF APPROACHING MOVING IMAGE DOESN'T REALLY DIFFER FROM LP-SLEEVE JOBS"

House is a partner at Intro, producing distinctive videos, live shows and ads for a range of artists including The Rolling Stones and Elton John. An interesting offshoot of this has been work in the field of cinema, with the most notable project being 2012 psych-horror *Berberian Sound Studio* (BSS), a meta-film about the art of soundtracking, with music from Broadcast. For *BSS*, House not only created promotional material and a record sleeve, but also a demonic title sequence for the movie's 'film within a film'. "I started making films for Ghost Box, and developed a way of working with found footage and stop motion," he reveals. "It's this sort of thing that led to the BSS sequence."

BUILDING WORK

For House, there isn't a world of difference in his approach to recording art and video work. "I think the main thing is that all the different media come from similar techniques," he tells us. "My way of approaching them doesn't really differ from the LP-sleeve jobs. I start with references, with initial collage styling, and then make them move."

This leads on to a conversation about how his projects begin in the first place – is it all dependent on the music itself and his own interpretation of it? "The starting point is a conversation with the band. This might be about the themes of the album, or a broader talk about films or books that inspired them, perhaps even cultural events."

House then creates a "reference board of books, film stills and fonts with which to try to find a visual theme for the album." It's a technique he's honed since the early days illustrating for Broadcast. "Each project is always approached as a whole series," he explains. "It's a world we'll inhabit for the duration of the campaign, and the LP sleeve is often just one small part of that."

So is vinyl still his preferred design format? "You're always aware of how the cover is going to look scaled down to CD size. But when presenting to most artists in the 90s and after, they didn't think about the CD. It was more of a necessity, while the vinyl was 'the thing'. It's the default format when you think about your music becoming a physical thing in the world." Proof positive, then, that the 'lost' future of vinyl never went away: a perfect fit for the world of Julian House.

CLASSIC COVERS

JULIAN HOUSE

STEREOLAB
COBRA AND PHASES GROUP PLAY VOLTAGE IN THE MILKY NIGHT
1999

House has designed many Stereolab covers. "The font and graphic seem to fit, but one belongs to the computerised late 60s, and the other is from an old Art Nouveau electric lighting ad," he says. "It becomes this imaginary future/past, a parallel world rather than a direct memory. The juxtaposition of things that shouldn't fit, something anachronistic in the choice of fonts and other elements. That feeling of having seen something before but not knowing where."

THE FOCUS GROUP
HEY LET LOOSE YOUR LOVE
2005

This mini LP was the second release from House's musical alias The Focus Group, on his and Jim Jupp's Ghost Box label. "With Ghost Box, we've always tried to underline the more surreal aspects of the music. Although there are nods to the electronic TV soundtracks and educational programmes me and Jim grew up with, they're seen through a sort of 'dream lens'. This cover has the cool, austere look of 60s Penguin books and classic Swiss modernism, but it's offset by the hand-and-eye collage."

UNLOVED
GUILTY OF LOVE
2016

"*Unloved* is a David Holmes project which is a bit like The Shangri-Las, but produced by Ennio Morricone and the Radiophonic Workshop," House explains. "The artwork and videos reference B-movie bikers, underground cinema, French New Wave and pulp 'haunted romance' paperbacks. The film footage was sourced from public-domain B movies and combined with handmade animation. With this project, the print artwork and film evolved simultaneously, both feeding into the other."

OASIS
DIG OUT YOUR SOUL
2008

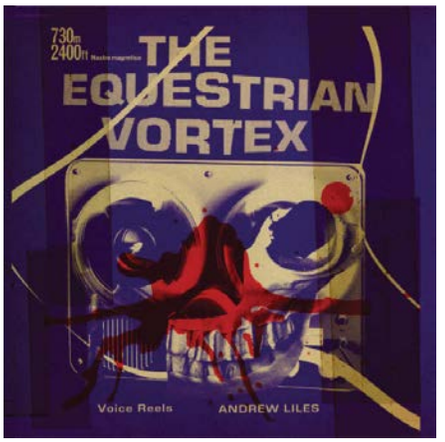
Oasis' final album came with some great graphics and a unique mission by House and Intro to treat the band as a brand, of sorts. "It was a slight dig at the whole notion of 'branding'," House explains. "There are things like brand consultancies, but I've always felt that's what a designer does anyway, on any job. The main thing is some element of consistency throughout a campaign. It may be a technique, colour palette, font. Every time someone encounters one aspect of it, they can see it as part of a bigger thing."

CLASSIC COVERS

JULIAN HOUSE

PRIMAL SCREAM
XTRMNTR
2000

This striking concept saw the band's videos and sleeves imbued with a stark military feel, and pioneered a dropping of vowels long before 'text speak' emerged, all in a way that still feels fresh and provocative to this day. "Conversations with (Primals singer) Bobby Gillespie were referencing dystopian sci-fi like Ballard, Burroughs," House recalls. "Things like the military-industrial complex. The thing that also carried on through that campaign was the vowel-less stencil lettering."

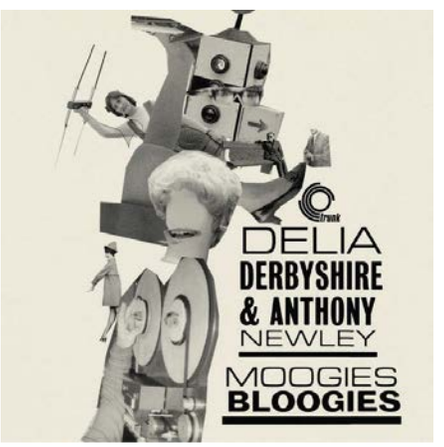


ANDREW LILES
THE EQUESTRIAN VORTEX
2014

This limited 10" by audio artist Andrew Liles is made up of wicked sounds from *The Equestrian Vortex*, the film-within-a-film being made in 2012 classic *Berberian Sound Studio*. "Originally, I was just providing art-department material reel-to-reel box covers for the studio in the film. I then suggested that we make a title sequence for *The Equestrian Vortex*… I also did real theatrical posters for its release, so there was work in the fictional world of the film and in the real world."

BROADCAST
THE NOISE MADE BY PEOPLE
2000

After a series of releases on labels such as Duophonic, House's friends Broadcast eventually debuted on Warp Records to enduring critical acclaim – particularly for the ethereal vocals of Trish Keenan, who died unexpectedly in 2011, aged 42. Broadcast went with a colourful, collage-fronted look for their first LP. "There was a sense of the band having a 'look' that wasn't related to images of the band members. With Broadcast's artwork, we were signposting 60s psych, Eastern European cinema, all without direct quotations."



DELIA DERBYSHIRE & ANTHONY NEWLEY
MOOGIES BLOOGIES
2014

Another limited release, this time a 7" on Trunk Records of an almost-lost mind-meld between pop singer Anthony Newley and the Radiophonic Workshop's Delia Derbyshire, of electronic music and *Doctor Who* legend. "*Moogies Bloogies* is an odd collaboration; the electronic music has a quirky, fractured feel, while the lyrics seem like a slightly lascivious stream of consciousness. I tried to make a collage that reflected those aspects, while also feeling 'of the time'." ●

DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Mark O'Shaughnessy discovers that, when it comes to the owners of incredible record collections, appearances can be deceptive…

I've written many times before about some of my digging escapades overseas. But some of the most incredible discoveries I've had have been right here in the UK. One late-summer Saturday afternoon last year, I was working away in our Bath store and a family of three came up to the counter and asked to speak to the 'proprietor'. Ancient usage, but hey-ho. "That'll be me," I said. "Do you buy records?" they asked. I'm always tempted to give a clever-arse answer when people ask that question while standing in a store with around 10,000 records in it, but I bit my lip and said, "Yes, we do."

At that point, a scruffy carrier bag was produced and handed over to me. A quick rummage inside revealed five or six very nice condition and highly saleable 70s rock LPs. Nothing special jumped out, just good, clean shop stock. I asked whether there were any more and they said: "Yes, around 150, maybe 200." I normally ask people to bring this kind of quantity into the shop for me to look at, but they were either unwilling or unable to, so I took the address and we made plans for me to go over there the following Monday AM. I'll emphasise again that they were seemingly normal, regular folk – nothing they said or did made me think otherwise.

My partner-in-crime on this jaunt was my partner, Sarah, hi Sarah... So, off we went early Monday morning, beautiful day – clear sunshine, perfect excavation conditions. The address was simply 'The Old House', followed by the postcode. Weird that, I thought… We soon arrived into a medium-sized village in Gloucestershire. The postcode was spot-on, but where was The Old House, we wondered? We looked up. OMG. The Old House was actually a stately home, it must have been set in acres and acres of land; it was visible for miles around and we didn't spot it… doh!

The driveway from the main road up to the house must have been almost half a mile, through two sets of huge gates to arrive at a massive, oak-panelled double door which dwarfed us both. Now I was really mystified.

We rang the bell, *Addams Family*-style, and after two or three minutes, the butler opened the door and asked us what we wanted. "We're here to view the record collection," I squeaked. The door was then shut in our faces as the butler announced that he would go and fetch the 'Master(!)'. After a few minutes, the door reopened and in the doorway stood the completely unremarkable young man who'd visited me in my store with his family. Friends, this house must have had 25 bedrooms, five floors, three kitchens, seven or eight reception rooms, four different wings… it even had its own chapel!

We were led into the main reception room and then we started to climb the stairs, soooooo many stairs. Up and up we went, I thought it was never going to end. Passing several (empty) suits of armour on the way, faded paintings of long-dead gentry all over every single inch of wall space, beautiful figurines and artwork at every turn – we stared in utter disbelief.

This was definitely the weirdest place I'd ever bought a collection from and, folks, I've bought a lot. It was also among the Top 10 best I'd ever bought

So, I hear you cry what about these records? Well, as often happens in these situations, the owner had vastly underestimated the count and there were between 1,500 and 2,000 LPs in that music room – along with state-of-the-art hi-fi equipment, cellos, double basses, a grand piano, pro-level speakers (several pairs), a mixing console and God only knows what else – my mind was well and truly blown. The wordless staff walked in and out while we weasled away in the dusty and airless room.

The records were absolutely excellent – a plethora of beautiful UK folk, some highly desirable prog, several psych LPs I'd never seen before and lots more – extremely good condition in general, too. I had to pinch myself to check this was really happening, this was definitely the weirdest place I'd ever bought a collection from and, folks, I've bought a lot. It was also among the Top 10 best I'd ever bought.

So, a deal was struck and we loaded the records into my bulging camper van. The butler showed us to the door and the scruffy Master grunted a brief farewell. We set off back to Somerset with our chins still scraping along the floor behind us… incredible! ●

Mark O'Shaughnessy is the owner of Bath record shop Resolution Records and has been a professional record dealer since 1993

IN THE LIMELIGHT

To most, 'alcopop' means a super-sweet alcoholic drink from the 90s – a rite of passage for many – but, as **Laura Williams** discovers, to a growing legion of music fans, it means one of the quirkiest DIY labels in the UK...

A selection of Alcopop! releases on vinyl

Alcopop! was formed in Oxford in the summer of 2006 when friends Kev Douch (from the Big Scary Monsters label) and Jack Clothier stumbled across a demo by a little-known band and came into a bit of money. "We decided to start a record label when we were living together and a bit drunk," recalls Jack. "We heard this demo by an awesome band called Encyclopaedia that we felt sure could be a hit. It wasn't, as it turned out, but we'd borrowed a three-figure sum from my dad, gambled it on a football match (Portsmouth versus Charlton, which Portsmouth won 1-0 via a Lomana LuaLua strike), and from there, we had enough cash to put it out."

And so the Alcopop! story began. The duo signed a few more small indie bands – Data Select Party, Midget and 4 Or 5 Magicians – created a website and started putting out music. "We started with a pretty terrible homemade website with twinkling stars on it and an advertising budget of £60 that we spent the entirety of on a punktastic web banner," says Jack. "Back in those days, there was a lot of hand-folding, sticking, stamping, printing, numbering and posting of CDs, and we housed the entire label in a small cardboard concern called Alcobox."

From those small beginnings, the label moved into its first office – an old converted jam factory. It's now situated in London, with Jack and Kev remaining the only full-time members of staff. The pair team up with a group of freelancers and collaborators to ensure the smooth delivery of label business – from press and PR, to design and illustration and distribution. "Alcopop! starts with me and Kev, but it's a cast of thousands… or hundreds… Probably tens, actually, in truth," jokes Jack.

PINCER MOVEMENT

Jack describes the exclamation mark in the label's name as "pretty damn vital to the whole operation", but concedes that they're just happy if people spell the name right. Like most labels, Alcopop! regularly receives demos from bands and, like most labels, they believe there's a real art to standing out when seeking a home for your music. "I love getting creatively packaged and interesting demos, especially," says Jack. "To be honest, it's been a while since we've signed anyone from an unsolicited mailout. Far more often now, we'll work with bands on recommendations, or because it makes sense and we love them in advance of us working with them.

"You try and reflect a bit of your own eclectic taste – but the sonic aesthetics of where we've gone have changed over the years. Right now, I feel like we're moving in a twin-pronged attack, which is taking us down the pop/indie/DIY route (that I think people have always associated Alcopop! with), while also forging a route for ourselves in the more alt-rock community – which I'm incredibly excited about. I absolutely adore the fact we can reinvent ourselves a little bit at times, and work with bands who we genuinely love."

Over the last year or so, Alcopop! has signed the likes of Tigercub, DZ Deathrays, Weirds and Youth Man. There's no specific

TOP OF THE POPS: 5 ESSENTIAL RELEASES

The Wit And Wisdom Of Nigel Farage

A unique 7" in homage to the great work of Stiff Records and inspired by one of the UK's most controversial politicians. *The Wit And Wisdom Of Nigel Farage*, released for 2015's General Election, was a completely silent track with an equally satirical B-side from Shikari Sound System, whose remix featured the sounds of seagulls and tumbleweed.

An Island Called Earth
Emperor Yes

Alcopop! bought some authentic 400-year-old meteorite, ground it down and sent it to the pressing plant so that it could be inserted in the first 100 copies of this album. That interstellar edition still goes for mental money on Discogs, as you'd expect, and Jack admits that he doesn't even have a copy of it himself, which he says is "pretty annoying".

No Such Thing As A Fish
The QI Elves

A breakthrough record which, instead of featuring musical tracks, featured a podcast – in the form of a single episode of what is usually a digital-only programme. Alcopop! asked Corey Taylor from Slipknot to record a secret track on the B-side, and included a download card offering access to the podcast's first 52 episodes inside every record.

Evolve Or Die
Tigercub

Tigercub's EP was presented as a pay-what-you-want campaign, and the first pressing sold out in under 24 hours. Jack said: "We could have lost an absolute stack on it, but fans paid what they could afford. It felt really positive and inclusive – we had a bit of a mantra that this EP was so powerful it had to be heard on vinyl, whether you had money to buy it or not."

Sensible Record Labels – A RSD '15 Compilation

Alcopop! curated an awesome compilation of some of the best UK labels for Record Store Day 2015, and put it out for a mere £10. It included hundreds of songs from the labels on the included download card, with offcuts of red, yellow and black vinyl hand-pressed into each individual see-through vinyl unit, making each one unique.

Jack on the current Alcopop! roster

Nelson Can
"Nelson Can trade in luxuriant Danish alternative indie with a sleek pop heartbeat, but deliver all the feels. Their recent *EP3* was No. 1 on the Danish vinyl chart and is one of the most deep and expansive EPs I've ever heard…"

Peaness
"Pure unadulterated fun, Peaness craft sensational pop hits and deliver them with absolute panache. On such a trajectory right now, and so, so good live."

Tigercub
"Grunge-infused alt-rock from a band who absolutely slay live. Some of the nicest and most dedicated people we've worked with. If you take one thing from all my nonsense, please make it this – go and listen to *Control* by this band right away!"

DZ Deathrays
"Riffftastic legends from Australia who bring so much party that it's difficult to contain!"

Weirds
"Psych-rock intensity like nothing I've ever seen before on a stage… Absolutely huge sounding and completely unstoppable!"

The Spook School
"DIY pop splendour with heartfelt, but fun songs that will be buzzing round your head for weeks. They say: 'Why cry when you can dance?' and I love that."

Happy Accidents
"Incredibly deep sentiments and feelings buried in the most wonderful pop hooks."

Youth Man
"New signings, and incredibly powerful vocally and through melody. The new stuff is so accessible, but retains all of the intensity that you'd expect."

Best Ex
"Sun-drenched, beautifully structured pop songs that tell of love and loss in the most wonderful way. Listen to Best Ex to instantly feel better about anything and everything."

The Spills
"Heartily riff-driven slacker pop that moves like an express train with a boatload of ferocity!"

We bought UKIP's website for a few hours, too, in the run-up to the release

tactic behind this, as Jack reveals: "I don't really believe in strictly adhering to one genre because you feel you have to. This is our label, so fuck it – let's work with bands because they're brilliant – not just because they sound a certain way."

The same is true for formats, where there's also no set way of doing things. Alcopop! have released music as downloads, CDs, cassettes and, of course, on vinyl. "We love vinyl," beams Jack. "We absolutely adore it, and it's a big part of what we do. There's nothing quite like seeing that record that everyone has sweated blood into (not literally, like – though that is a thought!), in your hands on shiny wax."

You shouldn't rule out seeing a blood-infused record in future. It would be part of a proud tradition of radical recent vinyl releases – including one made with meteorite dust infused into the vinyl, a podcast debut for the format and one completely silent record, called *The Wit And Wisdom Of Nigel Farage*. "That release went everywhere press-wise, as we bought UKIP's website for a few hours, too, in the run-up to the release and told everyone we were going to put multicoloured unicorns all over it. I had *The Daily Telegraph*'s political correspondent on the phone live from Westminster and I heard they had a crisis meeting at UKIP HQ that day about little old us."

Denmark's rising indie-pop stars Nelson Can's *EP3*

RSD 2015 saw Alcopop! release a four-coloured vinyl boxset of *Zaireeka* by Flaming Lips

Asked if gimmicks are necessary to shift records these days, Jack says: "We've done some wonderful gimmicks I really love; but a gimmick for gimmick's sake can be a bit shit over time – and we want to be taken seriously, not just as 'that label who put a compilation out on a bike' – though that was fun!

"I'd describe us as (hopefully) utilising creativity to enrich the overall experience of purchasing your record, but making sure that the record and the music itself remains at the heart of the reason you're buying that product. I think you can have fun with records if everyone's up for it – and if that helps bring the album to more people's attention, then I'm all for it."

He adds: "One of the things that pisses me off most about vinyl is when people just don't bother making it look good. I've bought so many boring reissues of old records I loved only to find that whoever released it has basically just bought the licence, pressed it as cheaply as possible and fired it out to make a quick buck. Where's the heart?"

VINYL FOR ALL

But, despite being a vinyl fanatic himself, Jack recognises the importance of streaming music – often as a segue into investing in the physical product.

"I think it's vital when it comes to running a label that you take into account the way people actually want to consume music," Jack muses, "and take care not to dictate to people how you believe it should be done. If people want vinyl, give them vinyl. I think it's important to make vinyl accessible and not just the privilege of those with shiny listening rooms and £10K speakers to indulge in on a Saturday morning after a hard week making money.

"And if people want to spend their valuable time streaming your music, then you should make sure that you make it available to them. Ultimately, you can't hug an MP3! To me, the streaming culture actually works wonderfully well hand-in-hand with selling records and merch. It allows people to filter through all the bands they're being hammered with on social media day-in, day-out, and take that next step in the voyage of discovery – then, when and if they're suitably impressed, they can invest in vinyl, a tee, gig tickets and the rest of their journey with that artist."

If any label knows how to do merch, then surely Alcopop! is it. Jack dubs their approach "a great mix of ideas from a host of different folk", whispering: "I'll usually try and claim the credit, if no one else is looking." Kev and his girlfriend Gemma came up with a *Jurassic Park*-inspired design, which you're likely to see at many a festival or gig these days – an image of a dinosaur from the infamous 1994 film with the words 'Clever Girl'… a must-have for most 30-something pop-culture fans. And Jack came up with the idea for the Johnny Foreigner *Certain Songs Are Cursed* 'Frisbee' EP (a CD housed beneath a frisbee), which sold out in a day.

It's not all brilliant ideas and fun times in camp Alcopop!, though – as with most indie labels, the struggle is real. Jack says they've have had a few dark times. "I remember a pretty sad day a few years ago, when I was in town checking my-and-the-label's bank account and we only had £3.16 left. We're never about the money, but when you've poured years of your life into something and you've got an inanimate screen telling you that you've nothing to show for it, it's all rather galling. Fuck that noise, though – Alcopop! is 99.9% awesome times."

He adds: "If we can keep releasing ever more awesome bands and feeling like we're relevant and growing, we're happy to keep on putting the hours in. Though I do have a far-reaching vision – it's a hazy, tropical sort of vision and it just looks really nice up there – I don't have a defined step-by-step pattern to get there. That's kind of the joy of running an indie to me." ●

Jack Clothier, co-founder of Alcopop!, with a copy of the label's RSD 2015 compilation

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THE WRATH OF JAH
"RAISE YOUR VOICE"
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SUPERTONE RECORDS

BRIXTON, LONDON

For 35 years, Wally Bryan has overseen Brixton institution Supertone Records. **Garth Cartwright** meets the man keeping the flame burning for reggae and Caribbean vinyl in South London…

As the epicentre of black Britain, Brixton has long been celebrated for its creative energies and strong sense of community. Today, London SW8 is in a state of flux, with ongoing gentrification leading to local residents protesting over being priced out of their own neighbourhood. Thankfully, some things remain unchanged – and one of these is Supertone Records, Brixton's oldest and, more importantly, foremost record shop.

Trading for 35 years, Supertone is both a South London institution and reggae temple. When the shop first opened, Brixton was home to many record stores, the neighbourhood having long been a musical hub (which it remains today, with plenty of live music venues, pubs and clubs). Over the years, Brixton saw shops come and go – Our Price opened the 300th shop in their chain here in 1990 and the celebrated rocksteady singer Alton Ellis had his own record shop, Altone, in the Granville Arcade (now rebranded as Brixton Village), while the ominously titled Blacker Dread existed in the nearby Reliance Arcade. On the main road was Red Records, a rap/R&B specialist.

By 2015, Supertone stood as the neighbourhood's last remaining record shop. Since then, three small, vinyl-oriented record shops have opened in central Brixton. Which is excellent, as each of them focuses on a different musical niche: but none holds a candle to Supertone, the big daddy of South London vinyl.

Situated at 110 Acre Lane – on the busy road that leads from Brixton towards Clapham – Supertone has changed little over the decades. Entering, you find quite a narrow space with a long, high counter running almost the entire length of the shop. Vinyl 45s and LPs cover the walls, all of them protected in plastic bags. There are racks of LPs and CDs. Posters advertise upcoming concerts, dances and community events. Out back are walls of records – the kind of stuff that makes collectors moan. Behind the counter stands Wally Bryan, an affable Jamaican whose warm, witty manner makes him appear far younger than he actually is. "I closer to 80 than 70," says Bryan when I express surprise at his 50-plus-years' engagement with Jamaican music.

"1983 is the year I opened Supertone," explains Bryan, "but it was not my entry to the music industry. No, I've been in the music industry ever since I a youth. I born and raised in Jones Town, Kingston, and while there, I become a dance promoter. Coxsone, Prince Buster, U-Roy. I done plenty in Jamaica!

"I come to England in 1964 and, at first, I didn't work in music here. In 1969, I decided I'd left music for too long and built a soundsystem. I called it The Mighty Supertone and I play real records, not concentrating on dub like some soundsystems. I've played all over

> "I WAS A DANCE PROMOTER. COXSONE, PRINCE BUSTER, U-ROY. I DONE PLENTY IN JAMAICA! I COME TO ENGLAND IN 1964 AND, AT FIRST, I DIDN'T WORK IN MUSIC HERE. IN 1969, I DECIDED I'D LEFT MUSIC FOR TOO LONG AND BUILT A SOUNDSYSTEM …"
>
> **WALLY BRYAN**

Pictures Quintina Valero

England, played in Belgium. I used to play for Island Records, when Chris Blackwell was running Island and they had a soundsystem in a marquee at Carnival. And I still go out and play once or twice a month with the Supertone Roadshow. I run big people dances in Streatham and Thornton Heath, and weddings and parties.

"I decided to open Supertone Records in 1983, because things were beginning to change in the reggae industry. Digital was making an impact and this meant the soundsystems were being forced to change. My workload cut down. So I opened up a record shop."

Wally acknowledges that Brixton has long served as a black-music hub. Researching my book *Going For A Song: A Chronicle Of The UK Record Shop,* I discovered how, as soon as ska hit, several shops opened to sell the new Jamaican music.

"Brixton has always been a good place to come and buy reggae," says Wally. "Desmond's Hip City was a great, great record shop. Joe's Records was another great shop. Both Joe's and Desmond's were financed by Trojan Records. Red Records had all kind of black music. D.E.B Records – which Dennis Brown owned – was in Battersea Rise. Dub Vendor had their shop in Ladbroke Grove and in Acre Lane there had been Tops Records, a top shop! Music Specialist in Tooting Broadway covered market is another. He's still going and is one of the oldest shops in the UK. Peckings in Shepherd's Bush is another shop that's been open a long time. They distribute Studio 1 in the UK. Birmingham is strong, too. It was a good time for record shops back then, as people come out to buy the music. Now, I'm one of the few still standing."

MARLEY AND ME

Wally puts Supertone's survival down in part to his willingness to carry a diverse range of music. "I might focus on reggae, but I stock all Caribbean music. Big people music. A good record shop in Jamaica sells everything. And that's us. Some reggae shops only sell reggae, you know? I stock lots of gospel, plenty of soul – from 1950s R&B right up to the 1980s. I have Jim Reeves and Elvis and them singers Jamaicans love." He then adds: "I was the first mail-order reggae shop in England. From day one, we offered mail order and we still do – Supertone has a website and a Discogs page."

Wally admits the days when people would queue to get into the shop and buy the new releases fresh out of the box are over. "See, the CD bootleg trade hurt us a lot – people burn 500 CDs at home and sell them at the market. And times change; new artists don't release a record, but put the tune out on YouTube and iTunes. Now, the youth don't come to the record shop no more. The DJs don't come no more."

He rages at the pirates who are getting away with illegally downloading music and selling burnt CDs. "We can't get the authorities to do anything about it. It hurts the record shop and it hurts the musician. I'm speaking the truth! Supertone say so!"

While Supertone stocks CDs, Wally favours vinyl. "Vinyl has a more positive sound. When you play a record, it

> "VINYL HAS A MORE POSITIVE SOUND. WHEN YOU PLAY A RECORD, IT SOUNDS SO MUCH BETTER THAN WHEN YOU PLAY A CD. WE PLAY OUR SOUNDSYSTEM OUT A LOT AND I CAN TELL WHEN A DJ IS USING VINYL AND WHEN HE IS USING A CD"
>
> **WALLY BRYAN**

THE BIG FIVE

FIVE ALBUMS SUPERTONE'S CUSTOMERS LOVE

THE WAILERS
CATCH A FIRE (ORIGINAL CIGARETTE-LIGHTER SLEEVE)

TWINKLE BROTHERS
RASTA PON TON

BLACK UHURU
BLACK SOUNDS OF FREEDOM

THE UPSETTERS
SUPER APE

JOHN HOLT
POLICE IN HELICOPTER

sounds so much better than when you play a CD. We play our soundsystem out a lot and I can tell when a DJ is using vinyl and when he is using a CD. And the vinyl, it holds value."

Indeed, Supertone offers exclusive, new 12" 45 pressings of classic reggae tunes that Wally licenses and re-presses (including their original label).

"What I do with my shop is to keep things real. I pay VAT. I still have people who come to my shop and want a real record. And I keep putting great music out. I license tunes from the owner and I press 300 or 400 copies. I do the research to what my customer wants and then I make the deal. I do this because my customers appreciate that I keep great tunes available. If they're not available, then people have to pay too much for them on eBay. I do it legal and press them well. You know when you buy a tune from Supertone you are getting a good record!"

Wally's lifelong commitment to Jamaican music means he's known many great musicians and producers. "At least 85% of the great reggae artists have visited Supertone. See, I grew up next to Trench Town, so know a lot of the musicians. Bob Marley and I were friends. Alton Ellis, too! Coxsone. Duke Reid. I know them all – the musician and the soundsystem operator. Bunny Lee, he's a good friend and always stops by Supertone when in town."

Proving this is no idle boast, in walks a legend of Jamaican music: Norman Grant of the Twinkle Brothers, one of the great roots-reggae bands. Grant's extremely affable, as are most of Supertone's customers, many of them being Caribbean men who come in looking for their favourite tunes. "I lose a lot of my records over the years," one customer tells me, "but now I'm retired, I want to collect them again. And Wally has records no one else has."

A father brings his young son in "to show him what a real record shop is". Wally says this happens regularly. Why, I enquire, does he think ska and reggae remain so popular internationally? "Reggae's a great industry. It gave so many people a voice. Reggae is all around the world. People love the rhythm, the beat, that bassline."

Having said that, Wally returns to playing 45s that his customers have requested. As I turn to leave the shop, he calls out: "Tell them when they come to England to visit Supertone. We are the real deal!" ●

For more information on Supertone, go to www.supertonerecords.co.uk

The Trip

The Fens

Mark Elliott relocates from London to the Fenlands of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire and takes a rural record-shopping trip…

There's a lot of water. Whether we're talking the waterlogged fields, the rain (it's proving to be a very drizzly winter) or the wide-as-a-canyon rivers and creeks, it's everywhere and I'm not used to it… yet. I'm going to be, though, because this is now home. After close to 30 years in London, my partner and I decided to try something completely different, and East Anglia's drenched rural flatlands are proving a fascinating new landscape to explore. We've found the local GP and train station, of course, but those plans for mind-restoring day-long treks across fields with Winston the pug have so far failed to materialise.

Yet there have been expeditions of a different (and arguably more significant) sort. A colleague once said the definition of urban orientation is how long it takes you, from your front door, to buy a fresh lime. I beg to differ: how long does it take me to source a second-hand Blondie LP? That's the real measure. Well, you can take the boy out of London…

So the answer to that key collector's question is, actually, not long at all. In the few weeks we've been here, I've been struck by three things: the abundance of places to buy records, the range of stock (and the friendliness of everyone who sells it to you) and one thing certain to pique your interest: the prices. Everyone I speak to is acutely aware that, for things to shift, they have to be marked to reflect prices that people living here will pay. Certainly, the summer sees an influx of holidaymakers who top up the takings, but it's the locals that keep these stores going. There's no question that the cost of living in this part of the world is significantly cheaper than the wider South East and the bigger metropolitan areas up north I've visited. Now, if we were talking about the antiques trade, I'm reliably informed that the rule of thumb is to buy in Norfolk, but sell elsewhere. This appears true of vinyl, too, with a number of retailers reporting that they often get dealers coming up to source stock to flog elsewhere.

The area is well worth a special visit if you want to sift through a decent amount of stuff at very decent prices

Among the places I visited, I came across one of the best crate-digging venues I've ever been to (with super-reasonable prices) and there, as elsewhere, I've picked up items I've never stumbled upon in years of collecting.

So this is a trip with a difference: a tour of my new hunting ground (with plenty of places slightly further afield left for another time, such as Norwich and Cambridge). You'll need a car, of course, as even the three shops in Peterborough, for example, would be hard to visit quickly without your own transport. It's possibly a bit of a stretch to describe this area as a hidden gem, but I'd say it's well worth a special visit if you want to sift through a decent amount of stuff at very decent prices. Just leave those 80s pop prizes alone; they're mine…

Illustration Ben Talon

❶ CLOISTERS ANTIQUES

1 Lynn Road, Ely, Cambs CB7 4EG
ely.myshopislocal.co.uk/collections/doisters-art-antiques-centre
Opening hours
10am to 3pm Monday, Wednesday to Saturday;
11am to 3pm Sunday (closed second Sunday of the month)

❷ SOUND-ON-WAX

Market Place, Ely, Cambs CB7 4NT
sound-on-wax.com
Opening hours
8.30am to 3pm Saturday

❸ LEWKS

3 Wales Court, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9JZ
lewks.co.uk
Opening hours
9am to 5pm
Monday to Saturday

❹ THE MUSIC BOX

94 Norfolk Street, Wisbech, Cambs PE13 2LW
vertigo_dma@hotmail.co.uk
Opening hours
9am to 4.30pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday to Saturday

❺ THE RECORD SHOP

10 St James Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 5DA
Opening hours
10am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday (closed Mondays in winter); 8.30am to 3.30pm Saturday

❻ RETRO! RECORDS & TOYS

8 St James Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 5RB
Opening hours
10am to 5pm Monday, Wednesday to Saturday

❼ BOB'S RECORDS

2B Broad Street, Whittlesey, Cambs PE7 1HA
facebook.com/bobsrecords99
Opening hours
10am to 5pm Monday to Saturday; 10am to 4pm Sunday

❽ MARRS PLECTRUM RECORDS

387 Fulbridge Road, Peterborough PE4 6SF
www.marrsplectrum.co.uk
Opening hours
10am to 4pm Tuesday to Friday; 11am to 2pm Saturday

❾ WEST TOWN RECORDS

81 Mayor's Walk, Peterborough PE3 6EX
facebook.com/WestTownRecords
Opening hours
10am to 5pm
Thursday to Saturday

❿ MARKET DEEPING RECORDS

Market Deeping Antiques & Craft Centre, 50-56 High Street, Market Deeping, Cambs PE6 8EB
marketdeepingrecords.co.uk
Opening hours
10am to 5pm Monday to Saturday; 11am to 4pm Sunday

⓫ UPTOWN VINYL RECORDS

Spalding Lifestyle Centre, 210 Spalding Road, Lincs PE11 3PB
uptownvinylrecords.co.uk
Opening hours
10am to 5pm Tuesday to Saturday; 10am to 4pm Sunday

1 CLOISTERS ANTIQUES

Ely's one of those grand market towns dominated by a huge cathedral (built in 1083). Cloisters Antiques (near the cathedral's front entrance) is slightly younger, but still started its life in the last century. Across three floors, there's a fascinating collection of books, furniture and the typical curiosities that you'll find all across the area. The vinyl is now all down in the cellar and, although there aren't many 7"s, there's a very decent range of pop, rock and MOR in LP and 12" formats. Prices are fair and some of the stock gets an airing at the antique and collectors' fairs that are held every so often (email Nick at elyflea@btinternet.com for details). I find a Petula Clark boxed collection called *Devotion* (on Pye) that parcels together some of her greatest-hits collections for less than a tenner, a very nice copy of the *Follies* London stage recording from 1987 and a near-mint West German 1964 issue of *The Seekers*. The soundtracks yield a copy of *Bright Lights, Big City* (with Prince's great *Good Love*) and The Associates' 12" *Message Oblique Speech*, so I'd say there's more than just pop to be found here.

Cloisters Antiques started its life in the last century. The vinyl is now all down in the cellar

2 SOUND-ON-WAX

Dean Tyrrell braves the elements every Saturday to man his market stall, with its really surprising turnover of decent stock across the genres. In Ely, this is where you'll secure more collectable fare from The Stones, Marley, McCartney et al. Dean's location in the historic market square, surrounded by a mix of stalls selling food and all manner of antiques and collectables, is likely why so many people think of him first when looking for a fair price for their vinyl. I pick up some decent soul (some really nice Motown LPs in great condition and, in my opinion, the best Gladys Knight compilation – 1983's set on Star Blend) plus lots of 80s stuff. Not having bricks-and-mortar overheads keeps prices very low and, for Dean alone, I'd suggest Saturday is the only day to visit this charming, ancient city.

3 LEWKS

Celebrating its 45th birthday this year is, perhaps, the granddaddy of East Anglia's independent music retailers. Lewks is a Downham Market institution and has championed Record Store Day from the very start, making it one of the very few retailers in the region to participate, with queues here, as elsewhere, usually starting the night before. The celebrated – and absolutely authentic – friendliness the area is famous for is evident in the detail with which Lewks staff explain how they try to make sure everyone gets a look-in. They have a strict ban on people buying more than one copy of each product (a few retailers elsewhere still need to take note of this); there's no second-hand stock for sale here, but the new vinyl racks are up-to-date and prices are better than you'll find in the chains. I pick up the new Toto compilation and order the new Justin Timberlake LP, which I'm told will be with me within the week (and it is). This place is so loved locally that an interesting brand extension for the shop is its 60s, 70s and 80s disco, held in the town hall, which is rapidly becoming a Downham Market institution. This is a masterclass in how retailers are adapting to survive. Check out the vintage carrier bags on the wall to see evidence of Lewks' success! When Lawrence Welham opened the store after moving here from London, it was during the glory years of the 45 and the 8-track. He surfed the video and wider consumer boom of the 80s, celebrated the CD and DVD revolution of the following decades, and now his daughter Danielle maintains elements of all these lines. They do stock some T-shirts, but I'm already thinking about significantly more ambitious fancy dress options for the disco. This is how to make a big impression with your new neighbours, after all.

4 THE MUSIC BOX

Before Christmas, I popped into David Allen's Wisbech shop and spotted a very decent copy of The Beatles' 1976 *Singles* boxset in the window. Regularly going for three figures online or at fairs, this one cost me much less than that. The 24 discs were near-unplayed and, alongside the vinyl reissue of their festive flexis that Apple put out in December, soundtracked the stressful induction into Aga cooking that was our Christmas lunch. David has 6,000-odd LPs and almost as many 45s. "I sell a lot of rock and blues," David tells me, "and there's a big Northern Soul scene in this area, but that can be a bit hit-or-miss, with the best stuff tending to circulate direct among the hardcore fans." David says that vinyl has been selling ever-more healthily and now makes up almost half of his turnover. The area's large Eastern European community creates some steady sellers that struggle to shift elsewhere. Rather less common are copies of Mellow Candles' *Swaddling Songs*. David came across a press copy – complete with release and photograph – in a box of various albums that had been left unsorted after he'd agreed to take the pile off the chap who had brought it in. "He came in with this box and said he wanted £150 for the whole lot," David recalls. "That doesn't happen often," he smiles, with graceful understatement. With much of his stock stored offsite, David maintains a strong, local reputation for helping you sift through a wants list (as long as you pay cash – no cards are accepted here).

David says vinyl has been selling healthily and makes up almost half of his turnover

5 THE RECORD SHOP

Tony Winfield opened up shop here in 1996 and this well-ordered store is a testament to range and proper filing. "This place saves me getting a proper job," admits Tony, but he's clearly made a success of this career, with an adjacent space being absorbed into his shop a few years back. "When I first started, it was The Beatles that were the strongest sellers, and that's still true now, I think," he says. But he reports – not uncommonly in this area, it seems – a big upsurge in sales from 1980s acts and the 90s indie everyone is keen to uncover, but remain very hard to find. He estimates that 10 people a day will come in to try to sell him stuff, but the majority is worthless to him. "I'll take the 1960s records and things like punk and new wave, which sell steadily, but not much of the rest." I pick up clean copies of Howard Jones' first three albums, as well as the ninth edition of *The Hits Album* (released in late 1988, the first without a volume number and the penultimate in the *Now!* rival's initial run). There's a lot more to go through here – including some super-rare stuff and many picture discs – but to do The Record Shop justice, you'd need a good few hours. Plus, this is another cash-only establishment and I need an ATM…

Tony Winfield's store opened in 1996 and is a testament to range and proper filing

6 RETRO! RECORDS & TOYS

Friends since primary school, Liam Baker and Karl Storf have brought to life a concept that has often intrigued me while travelling round the UK. Town-centre regeneration requires a bit of lateral thinking, and their idea of setting up a record and nostalgia shop right next door to Tony's established business is, I think, inspired. Any suggestion of rivalry between the two businesses is swiftly dismissed. "We started out in July last year," Karl tells me. "Tony, who we've known for ages, was really supportive and actually helped us with introductions to the landlord." Liam admits the first year has been tough. "I've never had so much stress from something, but I wouldn't swap it for the world," he says. "Trade is good, but neither of us are business people and we're really looking forward to getting through the first year."

They say metal, soul, rock and reggae are steady sellers, while country is proving hard to move. "You really can't tell, though," says Liam. "One guy came in to buy a picture disc by The Beloved. He just liked the design and wanted it for decoration. He doesn't even own a record deck." Thoughts of a picture disc from The Beloved steadily yellowing in the unforgiving glare of sunlight are the stuff of nightmares for me, so I soothe my tormented soul with the 1982 *Brimstone & Treacle* soundtrack and a fantastic boxed edition of Elton John's *Live In Australia With The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra* (again, far cheaper than its current online average price). Previous trips have yielded a good number of 12" singles and some choice soundtrack discs, including a pristine picture-sleeve 7" of *Star Wars (Main Title)*. Retro! carries a bit of new vinyl stock, but the majority is used – and this retailer is a welcome addition to an historic port town.

7 BOB'S RECORDS

Fairs veteran Bob Athow decided to move his hobby up a gear and set up a shop just under two years ago. "It all started with collecting records myself," he tells us. "I don't do the internet and I was finding the fairs just weren't cost-effective, so this seemed the obvious thing to do." He says wrapping his van in the standout orange livery of his store's branding has proved a highly effective way of spreading word of mouth about his Whittlesey store on the outskirts of Peterborough. "I try to price stuff on what I paid for it," he admits, but says this keeps his margins tight. "I'm not making a lot of money out of this, but I love doing it and as long as I can keep my shop going, I'll be very happy with that." Bob also trades in record players and gramophones, while selling tickets for some local gigs. He says the 80s revival has seen a big upsurge in sales from the classic decade of pop, but he is steering clear of Northern Soul – despite its popularity in these parts – because there are just too many bootlegs in circulation. Bob sells some new vinyl and tells us he shifted 15 Amy Winehouse albums in the run-up to Christmas, but isn't sure whether to get involved in Record Store Day, with his hesitancy in part due to the high level of admin. He doesn't take cards, either, but that doesn't stop me taking advantage of some sale items – including the Status Quo *12 Gold Bars Volumes I + II* special set, the third LP from The Pretenders, some random singles and a George Harrison picture-disc 12" for *Got My Mind Set On You*. You get to keep the protective sleeves and the prices are very reasonable. There's a lot of stock across all genres to go through and there's a steady stream of locals popping in while I'm here, too.

8 MARRS PLECTRUM RECORDS

This famous business once claimed to be the UK's smallest record shop. Once I've concluded my trek around the country, I'll get back to you on that; but I can concur that its owner, Matt Hawton, surely enjoys the shortest commutes – it's essentially a shed in his suburban garden. Now something of a local landmark, Matt's years drawing Ordnance Survey maps gave him an encyclopedic knowledge of the region's charity shops, allowing him to spend his lunch hours cratedigging, but the 2014 decision to set up a shop in his back garden has proved to be a huge hit. "When I first opened, I was sure I had jumped through every hoop, but I must admit that, when the local councillor came round, I was a bit nervous I'd missed something. Luckily, the neighbours have been very supportive and I'm careful to make sure they know when things like Record Store Day are coming up." That annual event is a huge deal for Matt, with the whole family getting involved. "My wife does some food and drink for people queueing up, and the kids are fascinated by all the fuss. I'm afraid it's only the dog that doesn't like it at all!" The seasonal peaks of Record Store Day and Christmas make trading highs uneven, but Matt's surprising range of stock guarantees a good reason to visit across the year. "I try to carry a bit of everything, and there's certainly a big Northern Soul scene here in the city, but I think people are looking for a decent browse as much as anything." *Doctor Who* fans must love this place. It's a bit like the TARDIS…

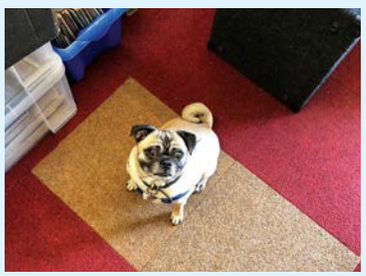
Getting there

This area is poorly served by public transport, and Wisbech is without even a train station. Rail services to Peterborough are fast and frequent, but only West Town is easily walkable from that station. The shops in King's Lynn are easy to get to once you're in the town, but you'll obviously need a car to follow this Trip. The good news is that you rarely pay for parking in this part of the world – even the council car parks in Norfolk are largely free. Watch out for the tractors and lorries, though – you'll likely get stuck behind a few travelling around, and there's a saying that's common up here: "Normal for Norfolk". This is sadly applicable to some of the driving, too!

9 WEST TOWN RECORDS

This two-year-old Peterborough stalwart takes a defiantly maverick approach to stock management, but the 30,000-odd items guarantee there's something of interest every visit. Eli Lawson has been working at the small shop for a few months and says he has swiftly caught the vinyl bug, with a growing collection of reggae already to his name. Like many younger collectors, he delights in eclecticism and admits *Tango In The Night* has become a recent favourite. There are a lot of Northern Soul 7"s in this shop and it shifts steadily, but Eli says Madonna has proved to be particularly popular of late. I've brought Winston the pug on this trip and, as ever, he proves an inconsistent collecting companion far more interested in barking at anyone nearing the shop door than in the boxes rammed with vinyl inside. I extract a couple of Grace Jones albums, the ABBA protégés Gemini (a very reasonable £4 for a mint copy of their debut album), Numan's *I Can't Stop* with its flexi intact and some synth-pop. Once we get outside, I realise that Winston's barking is actually more about the call of nature.

Winston the pug proves to be an inconsistent collecting companion



10 MARKET DEEPING RECORDS

Checking out this store's lively social-media feeds (facebook.com/marketdeepingrecords, in particular) gives you a strong sense of how much interesting stock is constantly coming through this large stall within the town's sizeable antiques centre. The area is peppered with collectors' places such as this, but none I've come across carries a stall of vinyl this big. Every genre is covered, but there's a decent amount of 60s in particular. It's certainly the busiest stall here on the day I visit (a rather bleak midweek) and I spend way more than I'd expected, picking up a lot of very reasonably priced singles and some choice albums. These include a 12" from 70s heart-throbs Flintlock, Carole Bayer Sager's set with then-partner Burt Bacharach (check out her very frank 2017 autobiography for a fascinating behind-the-scenes perspective – you'll never think of him in the same way again) and my favourite find from the place: the follow-up to Glenn Hoddle and Chris Waddle's only hit, *Diamond Lights*: *It's Goodbye* on 12", with its cheap-as-chips 'autographed' photo! Grading of the records is excellent and this is top-notch stock well worth exploring. I know I have odd tastes, but try to see beyond The Kinks and Cream – you might even find another Glenn and Chris record…

⓫ UPTOWN VINYL RECORDS

Perhaps saving the best till last, this cavernous vinyl depository is certainly a day trip in itself. Alan Barnsdale has run the shop since turning his back on a more traditional corporate career. "What started out as a bit of fun has turned into a major business," he tells me. "I've created a bit of an animal, but I really want people to dig deep here – I need to keep things moving, so it's priced to reflect that. We're just over the border in Lincolnshire, so I need to maintain Lincolnshire prices. I still have thousands of items to sort and put out, and I'd estimate we easily have 100,000 records already here in the shop." Uptown began as a small corner of a mixed retail space, but has slowly expanded to dominate the warehouse and now even hosts the odd gig. A decent café and even some public toilets make this a perfect place to while away a few hours, but you'd need to be here for longer than a day to do it all properly. Among the crates of singles – ordered by label, genre and artist – I find the most impressive collection of 80s picture discs I've ever come across – rare items such as Bros's *Drop The Boy*, Cher's *If I Could Turn Back Time* 12" and Shakin' Stevens' shaped *Pink Champagne* are mine for just a few pounds apiece. I don't have nearly long enough here but, even so, my huge haul blows my budget and I'm soon struggling to get it all back in the car. Yes, the drizzle has returned, but nothing can dampen my spirits. This place really is beginning to feel like home. ●

Uptown is a perfect place to while away a few hours, but you'd need to be here for longer than a day to do it all properly

Top five

1 ANTIQUES ROADSHOW
Norfolk and Cambridgeshire are packed with antiques and second-hand centres. You'll wade through a lot of damp James Last records, but persevere and there are bargains to be found. I came across a mint copy of the Herman's Hermits *Mrs. Brown You've Got A Lovely Daughter* EP for £2 and a lot of mainstream 60s singles in equally good condition for £1 each. Ely has a good antiques centre, but keep your eyes open – every town (and many a village) has at least one worth checking out.

2 THEY'RE ALL GOING ON A SUMMER HOLIDAY
Tourism is big business for this part of the world and, while getting around is easy enough in the winter, Norfolk's summer traffic is legendary. Plan your trip carefully and avoid peak times, particularly on the busy A-roads snaking up towards the coast.

3 ALL TOGETHER NOW
Norfolkgigguide.com gives a great overview of gigs in the area, even if many of the listings are centred further east in the county's principal town, Norwich, which is a good 90 minutes from the western perimeter of The Fens, which spills into the neighbouring counties. Across the summer, there are a number of open-air concerts and festivals locally. Trunchonbury, held in August, is particularly fabulous (see trunchonburyfestival.com for details).

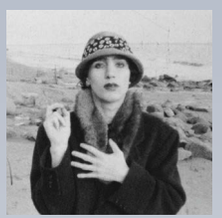
4 THE FUN OF THE FAIR
There are a decent number of fairs in the region – including one in Peterborough every now and then that's well worth a visit. Many of the local shops make sure they take a stall at it. Again, prices are better than you would pay elsewhere.

5 WHERE NEXT?
I chose the stores nearest to me as the crow flies, but Cambridge isn't far away, and that has the highly respected Lost In Vinyl. Lincoln, a little further to the north, is home to the excellent Back To Mono, so there's really no reason not to make a decent round-trip of it. But carry cash – many shops don't take cards and ATM coverage is patchy outside the big towns.

THE **BIG** REISSUE

Superior Viaduct

From its beginnings in 2012 reissuing out-of-print Bay Area post-punk records, San Francisco's Superior Viaduct has branched out in all directions – it even runs two shops. **Chris Parkin** hears how founder Chris Viaduct has diversified the label's output…



Since the label's inception six years ago, Superior Viaduct has reissued music from Rome, Auckland, Miami and exotic Prestwich in Greater Manchester. But when Steve Viaduct first resolved to set up the label, after a close friend demanded to know why he hadn't done so already, he chose to focus on music from his home city. Of course, this is a lot easier to do in San Francisco than it is in, say, Merthyr Tydfil, but it's still an admirable endeavour.

"I was obsessed with San Francisco punk and underground music from the late 70s and early 80s," Steve explains. "That was the scene I'd been collecting, and I'd been meeting all the bands. It was super-fun to dive into those archives, almost like archaeology. I guess my lightbulb moment was realising that it was all out of print and thinking more people should hear it."

The first 10 Superior Viaduct releases were by San Francisco artists. The label's catalogue began with 7" singles and albums by cult bands from the city such as The Avengers, The Sleepers, Tuxedomoon and influential 80s sludge band Flipper, and later, included the city's ultimate underground deconstructionists, The Residents. The label has since moved on from releasing only proto- and post-punk records, but that scene imbued Steve and his label with a DIY outsider aesthetic in which weirdness and convention-trashing rules.

"We're into punk as much as free jazz and avant-garde music, so it's more about releasing records we love," Steve admits, talking about his own catholic tastes. Over the last few years, Superior Viaduct has broadened its scope, fidgeting across sub-genres to include French avant-garde pop star Brigitte Fontaine; notorious Miami noise band Harry Pussy; and anti-art drone musician Henry Flynt, who made like his friend La Monte Young and paired Indian ragas with Appalachian fiddle through the 60s.

"LAST YEAR, WE PUT OUT ALMOST 30 RECORDS, WHICH IS A LOT. WE KEEP SAYING WE'RE GOING TO SLOW DOWN, BUT THEN WE SIGN MORE GREAT TITLES AND SAY, 'FUCK IT'"

Superior Viaduct now runs two shops in Oakland and San Francisco, called Stranded, stocking essential outsider music. Influencing one another, the label's sprawling catalogue, which might add Bert Jansch one week, The Fall and Tony Conrad the next, now resembles the cluttered racks of its shop; while Stranded's stock is curated much like its founding label. They are, it's safe to say, busy.

"Last year, we put out almost 30 records, which is a lot," admits Steve. "We keep saying we're going to slow down, but then we sign more great titles and say, 'Fuck it'. There's just too much music – and not enough labels to get to all of it."

Steve's favourite reissue so far is John Frusciante's 1994 album of eccentric, lo-fi psychedelia, *Niandra LaDes And Usually Just A T-Shirt*, made in his downtime from Red Hot Chili Peppers. But that could change, with a series of Spacemen 3 reissues on the way, plus killer releases from The Mekons, Remko Scha, Faust, Takehisa Kosugi and, bringing it back to San Francisco again, Terry Riley. ●

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Led Zeppelin

HOW THE WEST WAS WON

WARNER MUSIC

It's generally accepted that conquering the US is something British bands build up to after stature is gained on home turf. But Zeppelin were never ones to follow tradition, so were already touring there just a few months after forming. Their relentless approach to live campaigning in the States sealed the deal when it came to winning over hearts and minds, and by the time they played the two shows captured here, it was their eighth US tour. But for a band so creative in their 11 years together, official vinyl documents of the Zeppelin live experience are strangely thin on the ground. Jimmy Page never viewed the 1976 concert documentary soundtrack for *The Song Remains The Same* as a true live album and the 5LP *The Complete BBC Sessions*, remastered by the guitarist in 2016, captured the group on the rise, rather than at their peak. Bootlegs of the two 1972 June shows captured here at the L.A. Forum and Long Beach Arena circulated for a while before finally being released in 2003, with mixing and mastering by Kevin Shirley. But not on vinyl. So now, 10 years later, for the final reissue from the existing catalogue, Page has revisited it and, like the other Zeppelin catalogue reissues since 2014, he's helmed the remaster.

The blurring of the myth and the reality of Zeppelin is part of the appeal, but you can hear clearly that *How The West Was Won* documents a band on the crest of their own creative wave. Coming seven months after the release of *IV* and eight before *Houses Of The Holy*, they were eager to show off their next opus, with a number of songs previewed on the tour, with the heavy groove of *The Ocean* here underlining again what a powerhouse John Bonham was. Especially so with Page's remaster.

Though for vinyl fans there is no luxury of comparison with this 4LP boxset, next to the original 2003 CD recording, there's noticeably more bottom-end girth for Jones' and Bonham's engine room. There's also incredible confidence; the extended medley that throws *Whole Lotta Love* into a mix with *Going Down Slow* (curiously, now missing *Hello Mary Lou*) would be arrogant in lesser hands. So too the journey through 9/8 funk and four-to-the-floor fire in two then-unreleased compositions, *The Crunge* and *Walter's Walk*, in a fascinating 25-minute *Dazed And Confused*. But what's easier to overlook is how well Zeppelin could deliver their own gentler material, showcased in the three-song acoustic section here; *Going To California,* especially, is aided by the mandolin of secret weapon John Paul Jones. Led Zeppelin would go on to scale further heights – the sprawling *Physical Graffiti* still lay ahead – but those later years of the band may yet see some representation. Page has suggested another multi-track recording will surface in time, that's "another view compared to *How The West Was Won* or *The Song Remains The Same"*. But for now, this is the definitive live record, proving just how mighty the hammer of the gods they wielded was. *Matt Peters*

VERDICT

9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

The Who

LIVE AT THE FILLMORE EAST 1968

UNIVERSAL

It's taken 50 years for an official record to emerge of these historic shows in New York. Historic for a couple of reasons, too. Not only is this a live album that can sit shoulder to shoulder with *Live At Leeds*, but The Who were performing in the wake of the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. on 4 April 1968. At the end of a gruelling US tour, the band played on the following two nights. They make no concessions to the politically charged moment, though, and thrash on regardless, ending the show in a blitzkrieg of instrument-slaying destruction. Most of the first night was lost following a technical malfunction, but longtime Who sound engineer Bob Pridden has now overseen the restoration and mixing of the second night's set. Pete Townshend very much rules the roost here and takes over all onstage announcements. The band's heavy takes on rock 'n' roll classics *Shakin' All Over*, Eddie Cochran's *Summertime Blues* and *Come On Everybody* sit perfectly alongside their self-penned material. If any more proof were needed that this was a live band at the peak of their powers, a closing 30-minute version of *My Generation* sees them virtually torching the joint. It's beyond heavy rock. It's maximum R'n'B chaos. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Neil Young

ROXY: TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT LIVE

REPRISE

During the 1973 live shows where Young played his as-yet unreleased *Tonight's The Night* album in its entirety with no familiar material to sugar the pill, at encore time the singer baited the angry crowd who'd come to hear the old stuff. "Okay," said Young. "I'm gonna play you something you've all heard before." He then ran through the new LP again. What a wag. This show at L.A.'s Roxy club was performed directly after Young et al finished cutting the album. Although the setlist differs from the studio incarnation, these live versions retain the LP's narcotic craziness. With *Tonight's The Night* written in the wake of the deaths of guitarist Danny Whitten and roadie Bruce Berry, Young is on the edge. The stunning title track finds him in reportage mode, with Nils Lofgren adding striking solos. *Mellow My Mind* has Young going beyond his vocal range. It's all part of the torn-heart feel of the album, though. For the full experience of the gig's out-there feel, Exhibit A would have to be the plaintive *Tired Eyes*. Few songwriters have come up with better opening lines: "Well, he shot four men in a cocaine deal/ And he left them lyin' in an open field." Extraordinary stuff. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

The Streets

REISSUES

RHINO

When Mike Skinner called time on The Streets in 2011, the time was right, but it's easy to forget how vital these first two out-of-print albums were. Bookended by the stirring strings and gritty urban majesty of *Turn The Page* and *Stay Positive*, the Mercury Prize-nominated *Original Pirate Material* sounds immense on 180g vinyl, the bass on *Has It Come To This?* and *Let's Push Things Forward* pleasingly hefty. There'so much more than ham-fisted geezer weed-wisdom at play, with *It's Too Late* and *Weak Become Heroes* nailing turn-of-the-century working-class existential fear. *A Grand Don't Come For Free* was a less consistent concept album about losing £1,000 down the back of the telly, but it heralded No. 1 single *Dry Your Eyes* and the entrancing MDMA swirl of *Blinded By The Lights*. Things were never as good after that for one of the UK's sharpest writers, but these records are an essential part of the fabric of modern British music. Let's put on our classics and have a little dance, shall we? *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

9/10

The Moody Blues

DAYS OF FUTURE PASSED LIVE

ABSOLUTE MARKETING

That most polite of prog-pop opuses, *Days Of Future Passed* celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. To mark the occasion, The Moody Blues performed it live with a full orchestra for the first time. Now seen as a groundbreaking work in terms of concept albums, *Days...* remains an odd mixture of the extraordinary and everyday – grandiose, swelling strings soundtrack a tale as mundane as a day in the life (no, not that one) of a working man. Jeremy Irons provides the new spoken-word interludes and there's no doubt the Toronto World Festival Orchestra bring gravitas to the original arrangements by Peter Knight. The Moodies even manage to rock out gently on *Peak Hour* and nail signature song *Nights In White Satin*. There's certainly no tarnishing of the album's legacy here. The question is, though, did it deserve all the plaudits in the first place?. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

6/10

Lou Reed

REISSUES

RCA

This month sees 180g vinyl reissues of not just one or two vintage Lou Reed albums, but five. And all, as the giant stickers proclaim, were remastered under the "direct personal supervision" of the man himself. We played them back in chronological order, which means the most revered comes first: 1972's *Transformer*, produced by Mick Ronson and David Bowie and featuring two alt-rock standards – *Perfect Day* and *Walk On The Wild Side*. Next up, 1973's *Berlin*, which was derided on its original release but which, no thanks to Bob Ezrin's overblown production, has gained a lot of charm in the years since. Plus, it has the song *The Kids*, from which The Waterboys took their name. Released alongside them: 1974's live album *Rock 'N' Roll Animal* (complete with Velvet Undergound interpretations and a gatefold sleeve, the only one in this set), 1976's *Coney Island Baby*, 1978's *Street Hassle* and 1982's *The Blue Mask*, with its *Transformer*-referencing cover and the running musical narration of Robert Quine's differently tuned guitar. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

8/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Jon Hopkins

SINGULARITY

DOMINO

Hopkins' stunning *Immunity* from 2013 was the *Blade Runner* of recent electronic albums: it seamlessly merged the digital and the human; it was dark, rainy and dystopian; it was sci-fi tinged, yet unexpectedly moving. And it was such a complete piece in its own right, it must have been a tricky proposition to follow up. *Singularity*, then, is *Immunity 2049* – wider in scope yet more accessible, it's everything the earlier record was and more. The new tracks share *Immunity*'s cinematic scale, their drama and obsessive attention to sonic detail, and the ingenious, almost subliminal way Hopkins develops his ideas. Yet *Singularity* is more immediate and hangs together even better as a whole. As well as returning to the effected analogue-synth-on-the-edge-of-a-breakdown sonics that worked so well before, there's now even more variety to the soundscape: more up-front melody, hypnotic piano, rhythmic variation and sheer intensity and euphoria all round. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

9/10

Jack White

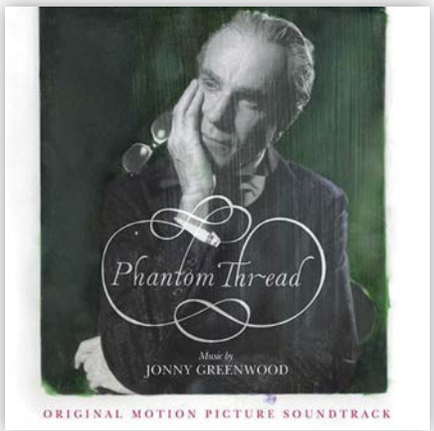
BOARDING HOUSE REACH

THIRD MAN/XL

The work of a boundary-destroying genius or overreaching, suggesting a bare cupboard of inspiration? Jack White has earned the right to do just as he pleases with his third solo record, but *Boarding House Reach* is a work of dizzying excess that will divide opinion. The primary diversion is into funk, but there's also gospel, hip-hop and country as White's backed by a lengthy guest line-up. Outstanding opener *Connected By Love* reaches a gospel cacophony, octave guitars, organs and the all-analogue kitchen sink being thrown into the mix. On the bongo-decorated funk swamp of *Corporation*, White barks "Who's with me?". Not everyone will be, and the disorientation continues as *Hypermisophoniac* evokes the sound of a fruit machine on acid. The bludgeoning *Over And Over* is nearest to White Stripes territory, although it's twisted into pitch-shifted rock opera histrionics. The grasshopper-mind creativity is admirable, but at times, White's *Boarding House* creaks under the weight of its disparate sonic building blocks. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

7/10



Jonny Greenwood

PHANTOM THREAD

NONESUCH

Greenwood's eighth soundtrack, a score for Paul Thomas Anderson's maverick period drama, was justly Oscar-nominated and demonstrates the same sophisticated ear for singular string arrangements he brought to bear on *A Moon Shaped Pool*: the opening *Phantom Thread I* could be Arvo Pärt, were he more extravagantly sentimental, while *House Of Woodcock* takes full advantage of a 60-piece orchestra for the rather more sweeping romance of Rachmaninov. The spiky, plucked strings of *Barbara Rose* recall Greenwood's work on another Anderson film, *There Will Be Blood*, and there's some calm, dignified piano at *Alma*'s heart and powerfully emotive solo violin on *Phantom Thread IV*. Though some complain it's a little excessive in the context of the film, as an album, it's richly rewarding. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10

GUM

THE UNDERDOG

SPINNING TOP MUSIC

Tame Impala and Pond multi-instrumentalist Jay Watson is prolific – this is his fourth solo album since 2014 under the GUM monicker – and it's a sketchy, time-travelling take on pop and prog rock beamed through a psychedelic prism. The styles on offer are extremely varied, with joint lead single *S.I.A.* a nervy and propulsive 80s-influenced jam that's immediately contrasted with *Serotonin*, a woozy, down-tempo dreamscape that weaves detuned synths, skewed arpeggios and sax over reverb-coated drum-machine loops. Fans of Tame Impala will recognise some of that band's tropes making an appearance, from the liberal use of effects on the vocals and drums to the transatlantic late-60s psychedelia of songs such as *After All (From The Sun)* and *The Blue Marble*; but this is a much looser and more prominently electronic affair on the whole, as the closing pair of tunes, *Trying My Best* and *The Fear* demonstrate – the former with its descent into arpeggiated modular chaos and the latter a darkly funky and slightly unhinged electro-pop workout. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

8/10

Eels

THE DECONSTRUCTION

E WORKS/PIAS

"The world is going nuts," Mark 'E' Everett has said of his 12th Eels album, "but if you look for it, there is still great beauty to be found." So *Today Is The Day* admits, "I had it wrong right from the start", but its upbeat, almost naïve nature betrays its overall optimism, and on *Sweet Scorched Earth*'s lilting, stripped-back chamber pop he serenades his wife with the charming, "There's poison in the water and sky/ We'll hold onto each other if we fry". Bitter break-up song *Bone Dry* also finds him alleging: "You drank all the blood", but he's accompanied by "sha-la-la"s and a heavily reverbed sound that's as much Motown as psychotic psych-rock, while, on *Premonition*, a gentle acoustic lament, quietly picked electric guitar and muted choral backing emphasise its precious sentiment: "You and I can really live/ Much more than survive". Lovely ambient vignettes punctuate this evocative coalition of magic and madness. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10

Nathaniel Rateliff

TEARING AT THE SEAMS

STAX RECORDS

Ask a musician to categorise their work and you'll rarely get a straight answer. Nathaniel Rateliff's description of his band The Night Sweats as a "Sam & Dave meets The Band combo" is pretty much on the money, though. Rateliff and co's rise through the ranks since their 2015 eponymous debut has been impressive and this new album has been road-tested almost nightly for the past two years. From the funky, horn-filled stomp of opener *Shoe Boot* (take a bow drummer Patrick Meese), this is a record that positively revels in its retro-soul roots. The classic Muscle Shoals vibe abounds on the choppy guitars of *Be There* and Hammond swoops of *A Little Honey*. Rateliff's growl impresses on the big-beat thumpers and the introspective *Babe I Know*, which sounds like a standard cut from the same cloth as *Georgia On My Mind*. They may wear their influences brazenly, but what terrific influences they are...
Steve Harnell

VERDICT

8/10

Laura Veirs

THE LOOKOUT

BELLA UNION

Fresh from her well-received alt-country supergroup sojourn with k.d. lang and Neko Case in 2016, Laura Veirs and partner/producer Tucker Martine turn their attention to Veirs' 10th solo album of starry eyed sophistication. There are guest vocals from Sufjan Stevens (on the disarmingly simple and plaintive *Watch Fire*) and My Morning Jacket's Jim James, a long-time collaborator, but Veirs' supple voice – occasionally elevated by unexpected outbreaks of ghostly delay – hovers front and centre of the mix. Instrumentation is used with surgical precision, to showcase rather than stifle, and there's some strident baritone guitar on *The Canyon*, heartbroken pedal steel on *Seven Falls* and telling use of strings on the likes of *When It Grows Darkest* to add depth and atmosphere. As ever, though, it's Veirs' observational lyrics with their indefinably eccentric orbit around universal themes which provide the allure; her words may be rooted in nature and every-day experience, but at her best, she can stop you in your tracks with a single phrase. *Owen Bailey*

VERDICT

8/10

Wye Oak

THE LOUDER I CALL, THE FASTER IT RUNS

MERGE

A provocative title from the Baltimore duo featured on p38 of this issue – backed up by thought-provoking lyrics which drill into your subconscious and whirl round and round for days; none more so than in the title track (released on limited-edition vinyl). Jenn Wasner's vocals are, in places, more reminiscent of Adele than the Cat Power-style melancholy we're used to – not necessarily a bad thing. Messy and distorted guitars wail as Wasner's hazy vocals provide a beautiful narrative. It's hard to pin a single sound on this album, as the tracks weave through various soundscapes – keeping your attention throughout. *It Was Not Natural* proves the most straightforward and clean indie sound, and also one of the highlights of the album, along with *You Of All People*. And *My Signal* is somehow timeless in its execution; it wouldn't necessarily be out of place sung by a siren in a 1920s cocktail bar. *Laura Williams*

VERDICT

8/10

Okkervil River

IN THE RAINBOW RAIN

ATO RECORDS

The Trump Presidential win has had an unexpectedly positive influence on Okkervil River mainman Will Sheff – he's deftly turned his outrage into a collection of joy-filled songs, designed to heal and uplift us through turbulent times. He goes for the jugular, though, on the odd but poignant opener, *Famous Tracheotomies*, which lists notable cultural figures who've undergone the titular surgical procedure, including Gary Coleman, Ray Davies, Dylan Thomas and Sheff himself. More conventional is the punch-the-air ebullience to the juggernaut chorus (and superb skronking sax solo) of *The Dream And The Light*. Sheff keeps it varied for the swooning *Family Song*, rocky *Pulled Up The Ribbon* and easy-going *Don't Move Back To LA*, which chronicles his conflicted feelings about the City of Angels and New York. Epic closer *Human Being Song* encapsulates it all. There's still hope for humanity: but with Trump in charge, it's harder to see right now. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10

Alela Diane

CUSP

RUSTED BLUE RECORDS

Alela Diane has, since the beginning of this century, earned a deserved reputation as the princess of real-deal Americana. *Cusp* is her fifth album, a window-gazing introspective about motherhood and time. As if each song was written in ghost-like trances as her baby daughters slept, it's a deeply spiritual insight into the female mind. Compared to her earlier, more fingerpicked albums, here, the sound is more piano-based, delicately produced, almost European in colour. But as always with Alela Diane, it's all about the natural spellbind between voice and word. The atmosphere is warm and homely, but every room comes with its memories, hard truths and inner conflicts. The stunning *Emigré* depicts the horror of migrant children drowned in the Mediterranean waves. Now 34 and already on her third musical life, Alela has lost the country innocence that brought her such acclaim as a teenage prodigy. Older, braver and more lucid about the fragile complexity of life, Diane continues her mysterious journey into folk legend. *Gareth Murphy*

VERDICT

8/10

Françoise Hardy

PERSONNE D'AUTRE

PARLOPHONE

Six years after what was to have been her last collection, France's arguably most eminent female voice returns with a new album as hushed and serene as her rank demands. There's little sign of the youthful 'Yeh Yeh Girl' here, but Hardy – now in her mid 70s – remains as seductive as one could hope, whether on *Quel Dommage*, with its sombre oboe backing, or the delicate *Brumes*, which begins appealingly with just voice and piano. There's only one English language song – *You're My Home*, a sparse, slightly over-polished track by Yael Naim – and *Dors Mon Ange*, a radical, tasteful reworking of Finnish rock band Poets Of The Fall's *Sleep*, probably didn't need its closing guitar theatrics. But La Grande Sophie contributes the lovely *Le Large*, which sounds like a Daniel Lanois production, and delicate closer *Un Mal Qui Fait Du Bien* shines like her underrated early-70s work. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

Gengahr

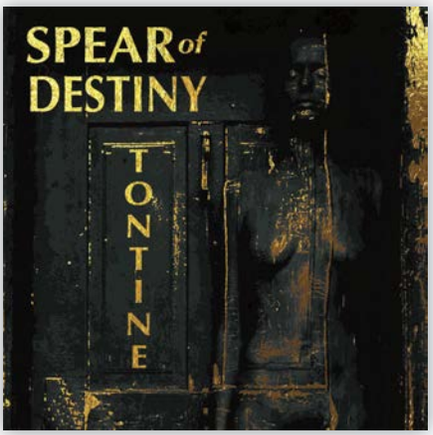
WHERE WILDNESS GROWS

TRANSGRESSIVE

Patience is rewarded as this follow-up to the London band's impressive 2015 debut *A Dream Outside* arrives after its initial sessions were aborted and a period of soul-searching ensued. That re-evaluation paid off, with Gengahr delivering an album that's true to their explosive live shows and balances pop sensibilities with grandiose post-rock dynamics. Guitarist John Victor, one of a new breed of effects-wielding sonic adventurers, stars throughout – his shimmering riffs met head-on by walls of ambient noise that make an evocative bed for Felix Bushe's newly anguished falsetto. The title track dances between summery arpeggios that bring to mind Bombay Bicycle Club and a lacerating wash, before highlight *Carrion* introduces a sense of fuzzy alt-rock urgency; a beautiful My Bloody Valentine-esque synth intro ushers in *Left In Space*, while Wolf Alice's Ellie Rowsell guests on the breezy *Is This How You Love* and Billie Marten appears on expansive closer *Whole Again*. Worth the wait. *Gary Walker*

VERDICT

8/10



Spear Of Destiny

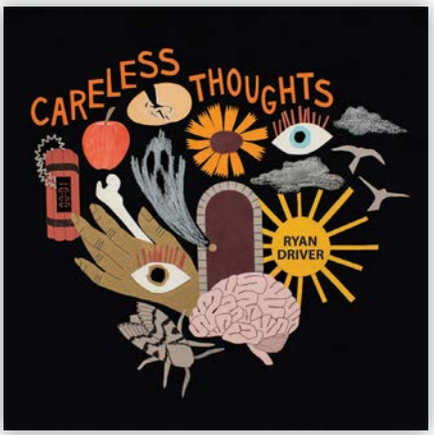
TONTINE

EASTERSNOW RECORDING CO

For almost four decades, Kirk Brandon's been spewing righteous anger like a street poet, and his principles haven't softened here, even if he appears a little calmer. *Enigma*'s quietly strummed guitars, for instance, can't mask the story of a military veteran, and *Monuments In The Sand* – whose chunky bassline and chiming guitar chords sadly never quite fulfil their dramatic promise – begins with "How do you separate blood from oil?". He's still asking questions: "Did you ever believe you'd be free?" on closer *Peace You Will Never Have*, while the ferocious *Brighton,* which begins with strummed bass and unsettling violins, before showcasing the band at their most anthemic, offers an unforgiving vision of "piers, queers and racketeers". His lyrics elsewhere are sometimes impenetrable, but no one can mistake the almost comic sincerity of *Medievalists*' blunt "Sticks and stones will break my bones/ Bombs will really destroy me." *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10



Ryan Driver

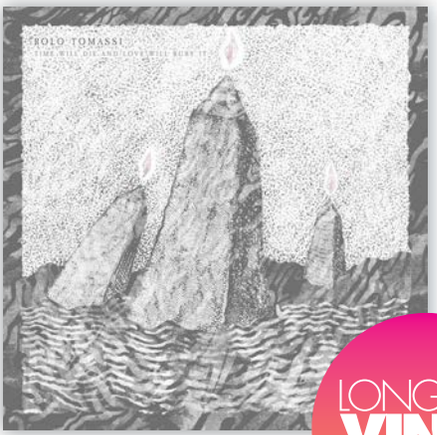
CARELESS THOUGHTS

TIN ANGEL

Though Toronto's Ryan Driver first made his name 20 years ago improvising shows with self-built instruments – including a bass made with street-sweeper bristles – his third solo album is far from the unlistenable mess of self-indulgence masked as ingenuity this might suggest. In fact, so smooth are *They Call This Everything*'s graceful strings and suave piano trills that you might mistake it for Harry Connick Jr., though elsewhere, a more accurate comparison would be Lambchop's *Aw C'mon/No You C'mon*, thanks to *Careless Thoughts*' tastefully restrained arrangements. Driver's never banal, though: on *It's Nothing Time*, strange, discordant guitar noises merge with his piano playing, while his gently vulnerable vocals sound like Will Oldham actually holding a tune. There are hints, too, of Bill Callahan's *Sometimes I Wish We Were An Eagle* on the languid, jazzy *Olive Tree*, but the dusky nine-minute closer *There Once Was A Sky* provides this cultivated album's elaborate, enduring highlight. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10



LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Rolo Tomassi

TIME WILL DIE AND LOVE WILL BURY IT

HOLY ROAR

Since their inception, Rolo Tomassi's twitchy mix of jazz, math and prog has transformed with each record. Yet with the departure of Joe Nicholson – the band's guitarist and primary songwriter – the band have never quite topped sophomore effort *Cosmology*: until now. Reflective, erratic and unflinchingly heavy, this new record is a relentless sonic foray, seemingly intent on crushing the breath from your lungs. Bookended by the understated *Towards Dawn* and *Risen*, this is Rolo Tomassi like never before. While the furious outbursts of *Alma Mater* and *Whispers Among Us* hark back to the uninhibited madness of their early years, the album truly shines on *The Hollow Hour*, *A Flood Of Light* and *Contretemps*. Masterfully weaving punishing riffs and rapturous crescendos, these 'mini epics' showcase a band reborn – unafraid to shake things up, and all the better for it. *Chris Mackin*

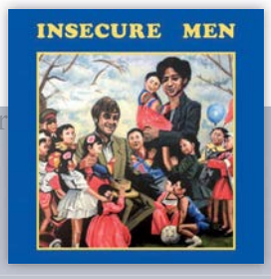
VERDICT

9/10

Genre Hopping

Experimental synth

Chris Parkin's circuitous route around the global phenomenon of modern synth music takes in krautrock-inspired minimalism, avant-garde synth pop and ethereal orchestrations…



Analogue synths are everywhere right now. BBC Four's recent documentary about minimalism, *Tones, Drones And Arpeggios*, introduced casual observers to early adopters such as La Monte Young and Laurie Spiegel; the 70s Elektronische musik of Germany's Hans-Joachim Roedelius, Klaus Schulze and Dieter Moebius continues to oscillate influentially; and key albums by 70s and 80s Moog and Buchla pioneers are reissued every month. Inspired by all of this and more, modern-day use of synths covers everything from attempts to create an eternal cosmos of mesmeric drones to parping, imperfect synth-pop.

Insecure Men's synth-assisted songs are wonky examples of the latter. Serving as moments of redemption for former Fat White Family member Saul Adamczewski after years of drug addiction, his collective's self-titled album is a weirdly infectious record that pitches up somewhere between the woozy, lo-fi glam-rock imagined by Lawrence from Felt and a dazed, lounge-lizard exotica with a children's choir. It's the best thing anyone caught up in the Fat White Family nexus has created.

But Insecure Men don't obsess over analogue synths like Saint Petersburg's Vladimir Karpov does. In 2014, he made *El Dorado* as X.Y.R. using Soviet-era synthesisers – the Formanta mini keytar and the Alisa 1377 – to create an imagined soundtrack for the mythical golden city of South America. What emerged was hypnotic, otherworldly electronica, inspired by Popol Vuh but sounding like sacred music from another dimension. It sold out fast when Glasgow's 12th Isle released it on vinyl late last year, but you can still pick it up on Discogs for a reasonable price.

> MODERN SYNTH MUSIC COVERS EVERYTHING FROM ATTEMPTS TO CREATE AN ETERNAL COSMOS OF MESMERIC DRONES TO IMPERFECT, PARPING SYNTH-POP

Iku Sakan is inspired by another kosmische musik master: Ash Ra Tempel's Manuel Göttsching – the man who, it's often claimed, created techno by running his guitar through sequencers and a bank of synthesisers on his 1984 album *E2-E4*. On *Prism In Us All*, a two-track album for Japan Blues, Osaka-born Sakan pairs the relentless melodic repetition of Göttsching's classic with a minimalist's dream of frantic gamelan percussion and colliding harmonics. The Tony Conrad-inspired *Bellowing Sun* by Paradise Of Bachelors' transcendental synth explorers Mind Over Mirrors is a similar trip.

Glasgow's Night School Records is becoming synonymous with synth-pop bangers. Featuring Franz Ferdinand's Paul Thomson and experimental musician and songwriter Richard Youngs, AMOR's two amazing 12" singles for the label in 2017 were addictive slices of synth-heavy avant-disco, while Patience peddles glorious, fist-clenched synth-pop. But it's the recent *Hilja* album by Finnish-born, Glasgow-based Cucina Povera (real name: Maria Rossi) that really stands out. *Hilja* – available now on a limited second pressing of 300 – is an enchanting but uneasy world of sparse synths, found sounds and haunting glossolalia.

The shadowy, drone-cloaked third album from Astrud Steehouder and Nina Bosnic's Paper Dollhouse comes from a similarly moody space. If an ethereal remix of Boards Of Canada's pagan period appeals, then *The Sky Looks Different Here*'s ghostly synth fairytales will be just the ticket. ●

HOW TO... IMPROVE YOUR ROOM

Using physical materials to improve the sound quality of the room you house your hi-fi system in is not the mystical art many think it is. **Paul Rigby** wants to shake up your listening space...

The world of hi-fi – in terms of the industry, users, social media, magazines… you name it – is packed full of chatter about turntables, amplifiers, speakers and DACs. The more enlightened also talk about shelving and cables and mains blocks and isolation.

Buy who ever mentions the room? That's right, the room. The room that contains your turntable setup. The room that you sit in to listen to the music itself. It has to be the most neglected part of anyone's hi-fi setup. It is also – now read this slowly and carefully – the most important part of your hi-fi. That's right. The most important part.

Why? Because your room completely dominates your hi-fi. Totally and utterly.

I'll tell you this right from the beginning: if you get your room 'wrong', then there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that you can do to improve the sound quality from your setup. It won't even matter if you've spent £100,000 on a turntable. It won't matter if your DAC is terrible; it won't matter if you have a mains supply so pure it's received sainthood status from the Pope. A bad room equals bad sound. Let me explain.

I HAD A BIG JOB ON MY HANDS TO DAMPEN MY ROOM – AND IN THIS GUIDE, I WILL BE MOVING AROUND MY ROOM, ADDRESSING EACH AND EVERY AREA OF POSSIBLE SONIC DAMAGE WITH A SOLUTION

ON THE MOVE

Last October, I moved house. I made sure my new home included a dedicated listening room and was very happy to see lots of available space. The room is L-shaped, with a wooden floor and two doors. At one end of the long part of the 'L' is a floor-to-ceiling window. At the other end are patio doors. It looks lovely.

Standard practice for a new room is to stand in the middle and clap your hands to see how lively it is. What you want to hear is just that – a clap. If you hear any reverb or echo off the back of it, then there's a problem. I did that and almost wept. I didn't hear an echo – it was much worse than that. I clapped my hands and I heard a 'boing'. I kid you not. I expected Bugs Bunny to walk through the door at any minute – it was that sort of sound.

I had a big job to dampen my room; I'll explain how here – particularly the tools I used, because they might help you. So in this guide, I will be moving around my room and addressing each and every area of possible sonic damage with a solution. I'm not suggesting that your listening room is as bad as mine was, but if you have any issues with your room, then maybe one of my targeted solutions will help.

CLAP YOUR HANDS

To find any problems with your room, do the clapping routine in the centre. If there's no echo after the clap, then the basic room is fine, but there might still be hotspots. You need to walk around to each and every wall – especially bare walls – and clap-listen-clap-listen. Then move towards each corner, each window, then each door. You need to find out if there are any echoes.

The reason? Because an undamped room plays havoc with how the sound behaves when it leaves your speakers. Without damping, or if a part of a room is 'lively', the sound will react oddly, bouncing wildly, moving unpredictably and sounding terrible, no matter how good your hi-fi is. You'll even get different parts of the sound reaching your ears at different times, instead of all together. Upper frequencies can thus sound edgy, brittle and harsh, while bass will boom and sound unfocused and splodgy. The soundstage… well, it won't qualify as one; your stereo image will be all over the place, while the balance will be off-kilter.

Basically, in this state, you won't actually be listening to your hi-fi. You'll be listening to the room and, until you sort the room out, your hi-fi will be a complete waste of cash.

So, how do you fix a lively room? Two ways. You can either spend lots of cash on expensive studio-type acoustic panels, bass traps and the like, or you can go budget.

The latter is what I did. Mainly because, after moving house, I was completely skint – although I did have a small budget for doing up the house, so I used that.

And what did I buy? Well, the solutions might surprise you. I used curtains, rugs, furniture, floor lamps, large light shades hanging off the ceiling and paintings. Nothing specialist. Nothing esoteric. Nothing immediately audiophile in nature.

AUDIOPHILE DECORATION

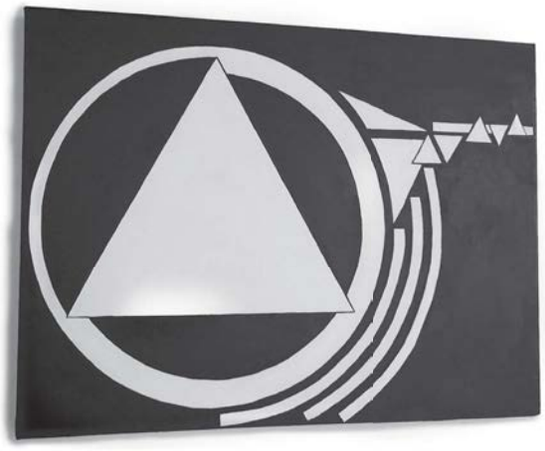
Saying that, there is an audiophile element in all of this, because these items are able to either dissipate the sound or absorb it, preventing the sound ricocheting like an uncontrolled bullet. You need a bit of careful planning. You need to study your room and consider the layout. You need to target the hotspots and you need to fix only that problem.

The secret? Keep clapping. When you've 'fixed' a sonic issue, clap, clap and clap again and listen after each one. How does the room's reverb response react before and after you make the alteration? What you don't want to do is overdo it, so that your room sounds as if it's turned into an anechoic chamber. Don't 'kill' the room, just tame it. What you want to do is to clap in all areas of your listening room and not hear any obvious echoes. But allow the natural sound of the clap to flow. If the clapping sounds completely deadened, you'll need to back off; you've put one too many corrective items in the room.

So, what do you need to do? What will solve the problem? What follows is a series of suggestions. I make no claim to fame for fashion choices, so just use these selections as broad guidelines. Tweak as you please, in terms of the finer designs to suit your setup.

WINDOWS

Curtains can be very expensive, but retailers such as Dunelm offer relative bargains. Prices can vary wildly, of course, and you might find examples that are far cheaper. There are three things to note when choosing your curtains: the heavier the material the better; the more material the better, as lots of pleats break up sound waves – a good thing. Finally, when up, curtains don't need to be closed to be effective. Open curtains will do the job just as well as if they are closed.



Wall art will help break up direct sound waves and prevent them from bouncing around your room

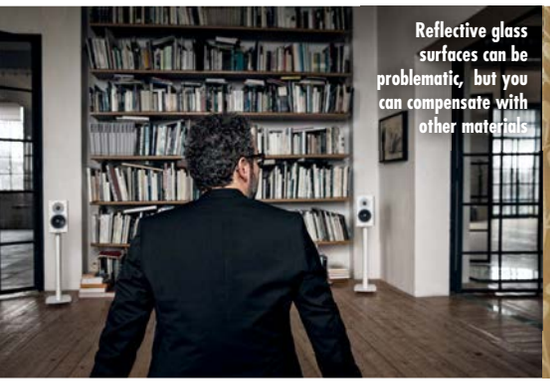
WALLS

Chances are, you keep your record collection in the same room as your hi-fi. Stack the storage around the walls to break up direct sound and dissipate it. If you run out of records, add books, ornaments, the cat, anything, to fill the spaces. IKEA's Kallax has become synonymous with record collecting, and with prices starting at £39, is a no-fuss, contemporary-looking solution.

Image Dali Zensor 5 speakers, www.dali-speakers.com

Preventing hotspots by arranging furniture stategically will help you set up your hi-fi room for optimal listening

Image www.dynaudio.com



Reflective glass surfaces can be problematic, but you can compensate with other materials

Curtains work just as well closed as open

Second-hand Persian-style rugs are great dampeners

IKEA's Kallax shelving unit can hold your records and help disperse and absorb their sound, too

WI-FI CAN PRODUCE A HIGH-PITCHED RINGING, STATIC AND A LARGELY INVISIBLE MASKING SERIES OF NOISES. TURN OFF THE WI-FI EXTENDER AND (IF THE FAMILY CAN BEAR IT) THE ROUTER FOR GREATER CLARITY

PAINTINGS

Sometimes, you'll have wall space (eg, above a radiator), but there won't be any room to place a shelving unit. This is an ideal area to put a painting. I recommend paintings on stretched canvas, as they are better absorbers than paper. Try to avoid glass frames, as they will encourage more reflection, acting like another window. You may be able to find bargains in charity shops or online – or paint something yourself!

FLOOR LAMPS

I find free-standing floor lamps, such as IKEA's Magnarp, ideal for sound-wave breakup and absorption because of the physical area they cover and the textural element of the shade itself. I have three in my room, positioned in the corners for optimum effectiveness.

DOORS

It may seem obvious, but this is a simple and effective (and free) solution that many people overlook. During playback, keep any doors in the room closed, otherwise the sound will leave the room, swim about, come back into the room and cause chaos with the sound that's already resident within.

Deploy lighting as an inexpensive way of breaking up sound waves and occupying awkward room corners

FLOORS

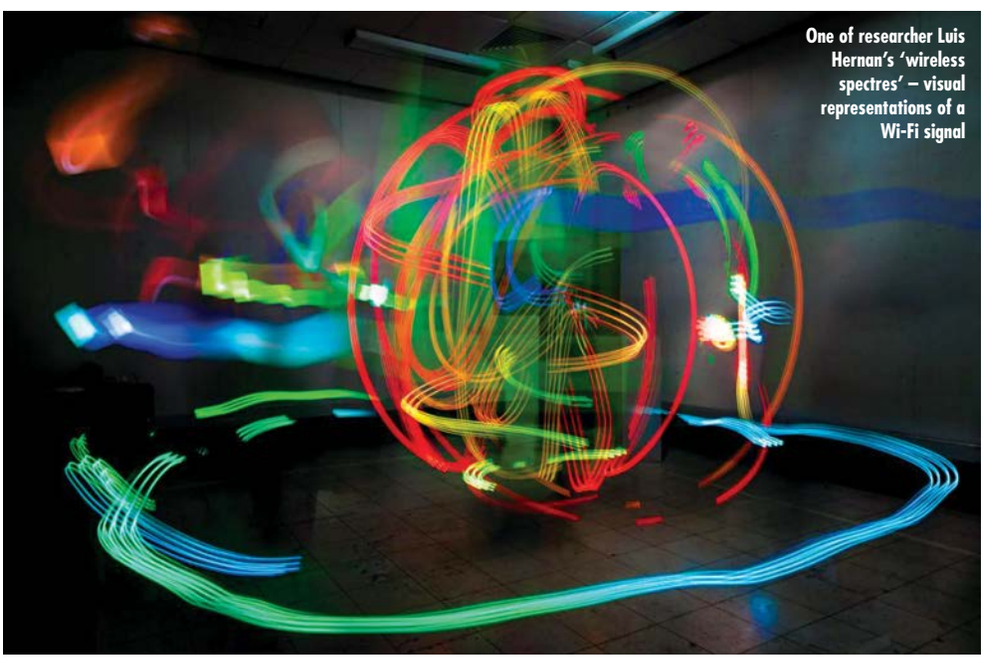
Rugs are perfect for dampening the floor and absorbing sound, and can be an inexpensive solution. I find that second-hand Persian-type rugs are ideal for the job, blending price and quality – and the hand-woven types last a lot longer. For wooden floors, buy a non-slip layer to prevent breakages (ie, your neck).

CEILINGS

Deploying a pendant lampshade that spans a relatively large area is a neat trick to break up sound waves. It'll be dirt cheap, too.

WI-FI

This may seem an odd inclusion in a feature about optimising your listening experience, but if you use a Wi-Fi extender in your listening room, or your house router provides good coverage, or you use a laptop or phone in the room, then the Wi-Fi signal will cause sonic problems. Just look at the image map created by Luis Hernan, a doctoral researcher at ArchaID, Newcastle University, to see what a live Wi-Fi signal looks like (see image, left). The red parts are strong signals, the blue areas are the weak bits. If left on, Wi-Fi can produce a high-pitched ringing, static and a largely invisible masking series of noises. Turn off the Wi-Fi extender and (if the family can bear it) the router to experience greater clarity and transparency from your hi-fi. ●



One of researcher Luis Hernan's 'wireless spectres' – visual representations of a Wi-Fi signal

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3 TRIPLE DECKER
The main body chassis is supported by three composite trilaminar sandwich-structured feet

The price is certainly not for the faint-hearted, but the revolutionary Air Force One Premium has been lauded as one of the world's finest analogue models. It arrives in three parts: a main unit (including motor), a power supply/pump unit and an air condenser/air charger unit. The turntable boasts full air suspension, with continuous monitoring of the suspension level. The condenser offers a consistent air bearing for the platter, while a vacuum holds down the LP to the platter during play. The price above is for the aluminium-platter variant. If you want a titanium platter instead, that will set you back a cool £139,000. ●

1
2
3
Air Force One
Premium

PRO-JECT DEBUT III S AUDIOPHILE

ENTRY-LEVEL TURNTABLE WITH S-SHAPED TONEARM

£325 *www.henleyaudio.co.uk 01235 511166*

Paul Rigby reviews the Audiophile, the latest addition to the Debut line of turntables from Austrian hi-fi outfit Pro-Ject, with a number of intriguing features onboard

There's a whole host of Debut-based turntables occupying the Pro-Ject product catalogue at the moment – but look, when you're on to a good thing, why change it around? Why indeed, because this latest turntable release from the company is Debut variant number seven.

This new, manually operated Debut is aimed at the general user, in that it's a two-speed affair and belt-driven, too. Measuring 415x118x320mm and weighing in at 5kg, the Debut III S Audiophile (henceforth the III S) is notable by its sturdy and thick MDF plinth (available in black or white). I'll cover this in more detail later.

The platter, taken from the Debut Carbon (as is the sub-platter and motor), is of a steel construction, which snuggles under a felt mat but sits atop a stainless-steel axle in a brass-bearing housing.

I've saved the best bit of the design until last, in visual terms at least. When I were a lad™, I convinced my poor parents that food, warmth and shoes on our feet were not the priorities in the household. No, a brand-new hi-fi system was a critical purchase. The turntable was a £60 Technics SL-B2, which sat proudly exhibiting its S-shaped arm. Ah, the memories… the nostalgia! The III S also offers that very thing, an S-shaped tonearm. When I saw it emerge from the box… well, it's a good job you couldn't see a grown man cry – I can tell you,

it's not a pretty sight. The aluminium arm's tube shape, a one-piece design measuring 8.6 inches in this case, may trigger a memory or two for you, too.

But there's more. At the end of the arm is a new cartridge, one that's been developed for Pro-Ject by Ortofon for this turntable. Based upon the popular OM series of cartridges, the new Pick It 25 A (an odd name, I have to add) houses silver spools within, to enhance sound quality.

Underneath are new aluminium/TPE feet instead of the normal plastic, inverted conical anti-resonant variety. Around the back are sockets for the included Connect-IT E Phono cables (hence, you can upgrade the cables further, if you wish). On the top of the plinth is a power switch on the front-left, along with a new minimalist logo on the front right.

In use, to change the speed, you need to manually lift the platter and move the belt from one pulley groove to another. That's it. There are no built-in toys here.

A THOUGHTFUL DESIGN WITH FEATURES AIMED AT ENHANCING SOUND QUALITY, THE DEBUT III S AUDIOPHILE IS A TRIUMPH – ITS SOUNDSTAGE IS CAPABLE OF QUITE STARTLING PLAYBACK

No phono amp, no USB sockets… there's a reason that this turntable includes the world 'audiophile' in its name, because sound is the priority.

Playing Ian Dury & The Blockheads' *Inbetweenies* from *Do It Yourself* (1979) demonstrated precisely how in control the III S was, and I put this down largely to the massy plinth giving this belt-driven turntable an impressive bass response that's firm and heavy. The III S also remained in control, too, so there was never even a hint of bass bloom.

The low noise helped to push the stereo image backwards, giving the vocals a sense of depth. On the jazz number *He Loves Me* by Ethel Ennis, the mid-range precision and low noise enhanced the accompanying orchestra's performance, allowing the trumpets to be light and frisky, even while the prominent cymbal taps were both fragile and delicate. The reproduction of Ennis' vocal performance was the icing on the cake. It provided the song with a refreshing simplicity – notable for its sheer purity. Her delivery was highly accessible, making it easy to pick up all the emotional nuances.

Offering a thoughtful design with features aimed at enhancing sound quality, the Debut III S Audiophile is a triumph. Its bass is strong and confident, while the mid-range frequencies provide a relaxed and low-noise output, increasing the lucidity of the soundstage – which can result in quite startling playback. ●

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
MATURE BASS	NOTHING
CLARITY	
DESIGN	
LOW NOISE	

SCORE
30/33⅓

CLEARAUDIO PERFORMANCE DC

HIGH-END TURNTABLE WITH CLARIFY TONEARM

£3,240 *clearaudio.de 0118 981 4238*

Clearaudio's new Performance DC turntable, with its Clarify arm and Virtuoso MM cartridge, is a stylish yet solid turntable, says reviewer **Paul Rigby**

Most hi-fi companies that you notice making a noise in the industry have been around for a relatively short period of time. A small selection, on the other hand, have a long and illustrious pedigree. Germany's Clearaudio is one brand that fits into the latter category: they've been making cartridges and turntables since 1978.

Every hi-fi company, in fact every brand that is currently in business anywhere, will attempt to stand out and to gain a visual edge – and this is something that Clearaudio's turntables definitely deliver. The Performance DC has the Clearaudio sense of solidity and strength: clean lines and a lean, pure approach that oozes reliability and trust.

'Solidity' really is the operative word, because this belt-driven turntable weighs in at a meaty 11kg, yet it never slouches. In terms of its footprint, it is efficient and trim.

That footprint largely consists of its thick-set plinth, which is made from high-density fibreboard but is nicely presented with brushed aluminium.

On the front-left area of it, you'll find a cluster of buttons. Apart from the Off button, there are three speed options: and yes, that includes 78rpm. Underneath the plinth are three equally strong-looking feet, which also act as isolation supports, removing as much noise from the deck as possible. On top of the plinth, magnets rule the roost. The first set are featured within the inverted ceramic magnetic bearing that supports a sub-platter. The belt runs around this and the adjacent DC motor pulley.

Over the top of all of this is a platter made of Delrin (or polyoxymethylene, if you're feeling chemically minded).

To the right is the Clarify arm, which looks beautifully formed and responds very much like a unipivot. Its bearing is formed by two opposing magnets, with a pivot wire supplying tension.

Installation of the turntable is, strictly speaking, straightforward. That doesn't mean that you can throw this thing together in five minutes and head for the cookie jar, however, as it will require patience and time to complete.

For example, you'll need to add a couple of drops of oil (although a bottle is supplied) to the ceramic bearing shaft before you place the bearing over the top of it. Follow the instructions carefully, however, and you'll be fine.

I did have three issues with the arm when installing the cartridge, though. Firstly, the rear-mounted tracking-force weight can only be moved by a rear-mounted screw-thread knob. Although necessarily allied to the technology of the turntable, this remains slow and tediously awkward to use. Secondly, the anti-skate is positioned under the arm, beneath the plinth: this makes it inaccessible and a chore to use. Thirdly, there's no scale readout on the anti-skate. I know many users appreciate a guide of some sort… I certainly do.

These are one-hit issues, of course, and once the installation has been finalised, you don't have to concern yourself with them again.

In terms of sound quality, I played The Kinks' *Misty Water* and enjoyed the sense of freshness around the mids and the detail extraction, along with a soundstage that was cohesive and ordered. The music flowed well, but the relative lack of insight and bass grunt indicated that the turntable was being restricted by the cartridge. I replaced it with an (admittedly more expensive) Ortofon Cadenza Bronze MC and was promptly rewarded with new detail, extended dynamics and bass impact, along with a real organic bounce to the drums. For me, the upgrade is a necessary one if you want to get the most from the Performance DC.

Turning again to the jazzier sounds of Ethel Ennis fronting a full orchestra, the Performance DC provided a sense of space and exhibited an easy carriage for the lively brass section, with real tonal purity from the trumpets and a texturally fascinating response from the bass saxophones.

With the correct cartridge in place, you'll find that the Performance DC offers heaps of energy with lots of get-up-and-go. It will bring life and a real emotive power to your music that will have your feet tapping whether you want them to or not. ●

THE PERFORMANCE DC OFFERS HEAPS OF ENERGY WITH LOTS OF GET-UP-AND-GO. IT WILL BRING LIFE AND A REAL EMOTIVE POWER TO YOUR MUSIC THAT WILL HAVE YOUR FEET TAPPING

PROS **VERDICT** **CONS**

BUILD
AIRY MIDS
TREBLE
INSTRUMENTAL SEPARATION

CARTRIDGE CHOICE AND INSTALLATION

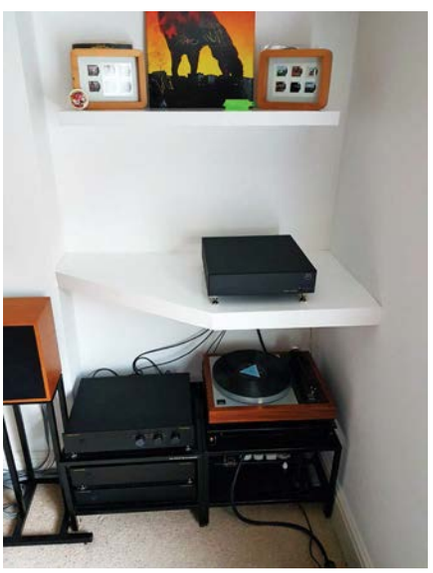
SCORE
29/33⅓

The Vinylist

JASON SCHOFIELD

Reader **Jason Schofield**'s love affair with vinyl began with a chance encounter with AC/DC. Nowadays, he owns 2,300-plus records, across all kinds of genres…

To be in with a chance of seeing your record collection in *Long Live Vinyl*, email your details and a picture to gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com



What was the first record that you bought?
"AC/DC's *Back In Black*. I was 13 years old at the time. I heard the song *Rock And Roll Ain't Noise Pollution* on my mum's car radio. I saved up some cash and went down to my local record shop, and made my first vinyl purchase not long after that. It was Iron Maiden's single *Run To The Hills*."

Which artists and genres are you most interested in?
"For the most part, I've been into rock, prog-rock and indie music, but as I've got older and my record decks have got better, my musical taste has become a lot more widespread! Among my favourite artists are David Bowie, Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Oasis and Soundgarden."

How many records do you have?
"Roughly, I've got about 2,300-ish, plus singles. My collection is categorised into different types of music."

What's the most valuable record in your collection?
"It's probably Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, an original first press with solid-blue triangle posters and stickers in great condition. I've also got a lot of other pricey stuff, including a lot of 90s albums, which are rare as they didn't press a lot of vinyl in the 90s because everybody was turning to the dark side – well, CDs!"

What's the Holy Grail record that you'd most like to own?
"I've been very lucky and managed to obtain many of my Holy Grails over the years, but the one I'm after now is David Bowie's album *Space Oddity*, on the rare Philips label in mint condition from 1969. I'm sure one day it will turn up somewhere… they always do!"

What's your listening setup?
"My system consists of a Linn LP12, Tiger Paw Khan, Ekos tonearm with a Dynavector XX2 cartridge, Lingo power supply with Linto phono and Exposure 17 preamp, and two Exposure 18 power amps, powering a pair of Linn Kan speakers. It's all sat on my Mana Acoustics soundframe and tables." ●

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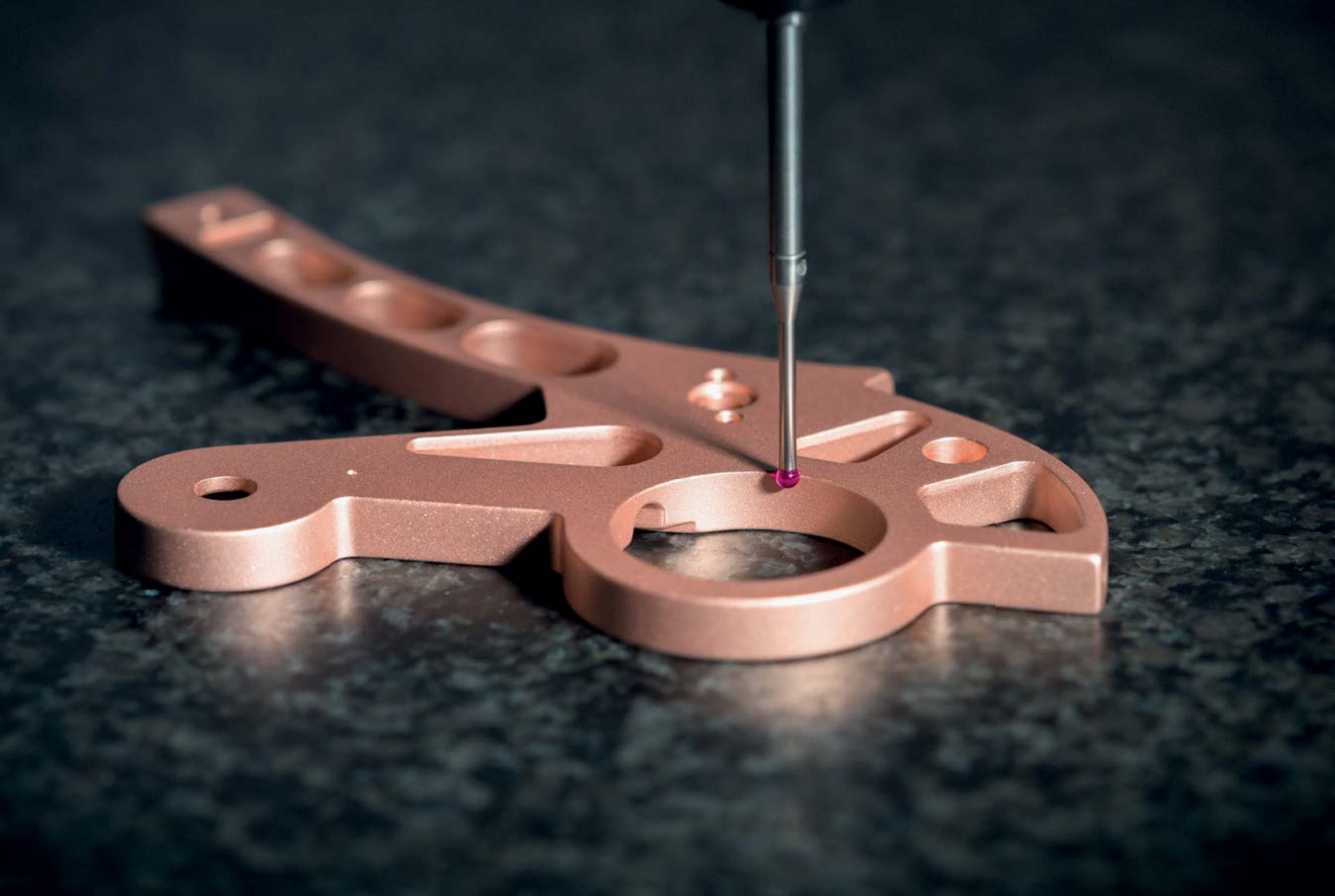

SME *Precision*

This is the control mount for an SME 300 series tonearm. It holds the arm lift and anti-skate controls. A simple task but still deserving an extraordinary part.

Precision engineered in-house from a specially-selected metal alloy, it is meticulously crafted to minimise weight and resonance. Check measurements confirm dimensions to fractions of the width of a human hair.

SME believes that each component in their tonearms and turntables must be the very best it can be, regardless of how minor its role. This absolute dedication has won the highest praise from reviewers around the world.

Isn't it time you listened to an SME?

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+44 (0)1223 653199 | 20 Station Road, Cambridge CB1 2JD

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